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THE AMERICAN

NATIONAL PREACHER:

OR

ORIGINAL MONTHLY SERMONS

FROM

LIVING MINISTERS OF THE UNITED STATES.

EDITED BY

REV. AUSTIN DICKINSON,

NEW-YORK.

"The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."—*John*, xii, 49.

VOL. XI.

FOR THE YEAR ENDING MAY, 1837.

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SERMON CCXVIII.

By Rev. TRYON EDWARDS, Rochester, New York.

THE INFINITE WORTH OF THE SOUL.

Psalm xlix. 8. *The redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever.*

These words suggest a topic of thought, demanding the most serious consideration. They involve two propositions. 1. That the soul of every individual is of infinite value; "*The redemption of their soul is precious.*"—2. That there is a period, beyond which, there is no hope of its salvation; "*It ceaseth forever.*"

I. The soul of every individual is of infinite value. "*The redemption of their soul is precious.*" This is the first truth presented to our attention. Now in estimating the force, or ascertaining the truth of any assertion, we are accustomed to examine the *evidence* by which it is supported. This is the case, in courts of justice, for example, where the testimony of *witnesses* is taken, as to the point in question. The question before *us* is, "*what is the value of the soul?*" We assert that its value is infinite. Do you ask for the *evidence?* To prove it, we shall summon witnesses from three worlds. Their testimony shall be given, at the bar of common sense. "Judge ye," as to its weight. And,

1. The *first* witness to the value of the soul whose testimony shall be presented, is the *infinite and ever-blessed God.* He tells you that the soul is *immortal;* that it is not only *capable of,* but *destined to,* endless expansion and growth; and that through the ages of eternity, it shall forever be rising higher and higher amid the glories of heaven, or sinking deeper and deeper in the unspeakable bereavements and woes of hell. In the strong language of interrogation, he asks, "what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" And again, he tells you, that the "redemption of the soul is precious." Such are one or two of God's many assertions, as to the value of the soul of man. But it is a common maxim, that *actions speak louder than words.* What then is the testimony of Jehovah's *conduct?* What his *practical* estimate of its worth? What has he *done* for its salvation? God the Father, to redeem it, devised a scheme of salvation, and for its execution, he freely gave his well-beloved son—a gift, in comparison with which, the treasures of a universe are but paltry trifles. Jesus, to save it, took upon his own soul

the sins of a world. Follow him in his career of grace, from a throne in the heavens to a manger on earth—from the manger to the cross—from Bethlehem to Calvary—from Calvary to the grave—and from the grave back again to his native skies; and in every step of his progress, in every act of his mediatorial existence, you may see *his* estimate of that for which he bled and died. The HOLY SPIRIT too, by his efforts to convert and sanctify the soul of man, testifies most unequivocally to *his* sense of its unspeakable value. No other object—no other being in the universe, has ever excited half the interest in Jehovah's bosom, or called forth half the effort in its behalf, that the soul of man has. When angels fell, no redeeming system was arranged for their recovery—no voice of mercy proclaimed peace in hell, and good will to devils—they were left in everlasting chains, and under everlasting darkness. But when man became the victim of hellish temptation, and the devotee of sin, the resources of infinite benevolence were put in requisition to restore his soul to God's favour, to holiness, to happiness, to heaven.

2. The *second* class of witnesses, whose testimony shall be presented, are of a very different character—I refer *to devils*. Could we summon some one of those dark spirits, "scarred with the marks of omnipotent vengeance," to come up from yonder world of wo, and here to tell, in audible accents, the condition of those whose endless habitation is fixed amid the lamentations, and the anguish, and the hopeless despair of hell, *then* you would *indeed* have fearful evidence, both in his testimony, and in his own hell-worn aspect, of the value of the soul, one of the alternatives of whose existence it is, to be forever the companion of *such* a spirit, and the inhabitant of *such* an abode! But in vain do we call to the caverns of despair to yield up one of their wretched inmates. The gates of hell, like the portals between time and eternity, open in only *our* direction, and the keys are in *his* hand "who openeth, and no man shutteth, and who shutteth, and no man openeth." How then shall we learn the opinion of its inhabitants, as to the point before us? Much of it may be gathered from the pages of inspiration. There you may find the most abundant evidence of the value of the soul, as estimated by devils. It is written indeed, not in acts of friendship, but in the equally legible characters of bitter enmity, and fiendish opposition. Through *their* efforts man was first seduced from his primitive holiness, and brought into a state of sin and wretchedness. And every hour of our lives, they are going about seeking whom they may destroy; striving by all the arts of temptation, and by all the force of open opposition, to circumvent our souls—to delude us to our ruin—to make us their drudges *here*, that we may be the victims of their cruelty and scorn *hereafter*. On earth, they are ever active to destroy us; and, as the unconverted soul is borne by death to its eternal prison-house, in the strong language of the prophet, "all hell is moved to meet it at its coming," and to exult over its remediless ruin! Could you wish for more conclusive evidence of the opinion entertained *by devils* of the value of the soul? But,

3. Let us summon a *third* class of witnesses—let us attend to the testimony of *angels*, as to the importance of the soul. They, as we well know, are ministering spirits to the children of men; and is the soul of trifling value, if *they* can condescend to be its servants? Often, under a former dispensation, did they come in visible form to earth, to do good to man, and to instruct him verbally in the secrets of the skies. And *now*

if the veil which hides the spiritual world, were removed from before our eyes, we might see them all around us, intent on their ministrations of mercy. For a moment let that veil be taken away. It is gone! And now we see with the purified vision of the upper world. On every side we clearly behold the angelic messengers—robed in the garments of immortality—joy glowing in their looks—love beaming in their eyes—hastening with all the activity of spirits, and burning with all the benevolence of heaven, to do good to men. There is one, beaming with a cherub's brightness and a seraph's holiness, ardently intent upon some unearthly commission. Let us follow his footsteps, and observe his motions. Rapidly he wends his way to yonder desolate and lonely cottage, the wretched abode of misery and sin. But what can attract the inhabitant of *heavenly* mansions to an abode like this? Let us enter with him and see. There in yonder corner, upon a few coarse straws, lies a poor victim of wretchedness and guilt—whose days have been spent in reckless depravity and crime—an outcast alike from earth and from heaven. Disease has seized upon his vitals, and his whole frame is racked with agony, while no one is near to sooth his sufferings or minister to his wants. But why that expression on his countenance, of heart-felt despairing anguish—mingled now with doubt—and now with rising sorrow? Is it from *bodily* pain? No, he is thinking *of his soul!* The Holy Spirit has moved upon his heart. His *sins* have been set in array before him. He is looking upon JESUS, whom his iniquities have pierced. "Salvation," he asks, "*can* it come to one *so vile, so guilty, as I am?* But I will *renounce* my sins. I will cast myself at the foot of the cross, and if I perish, I will perish *there*." In despair of all other help, he *does* it; and at once, his burden is gone! Now, in an instant, tears of mingled penitence and love gush from his eyes—joy spreads through his bosom—his fears are gone—his Saviour is his *all! He is an humble penitent*—A CONVERTED MAN! But where is that angel spirit with whom we entered this abode of misery—this very gate of heaven to yonder sufferer's immortal spirit? Speedily has he winged his way to his native skies, there to publish the conversion of this new born-soul. And as he announces the tidings, there is fresh joy among the angels of God, over another sinner that hath repented. Fresh anthems of praise burst with unearthly melody and sweetness from all the choirs of the redeemed; and the noble band before the throne, wake their golden harps to still loftier strains, while with all the ecstasy of heavenly worship, they shout that song which is the climax even of *heaven's* adoration, "Worthy, *worthy*, is the Lamb that was slain!" It is enough—enough—you need no other evidence, that *angels* correctly estimate the value of the soul!

4. We shall summon but one more class of witnesses to testify to the value of the soul—and *these are men.* And the *first* that shall be called to the stand is

The habitually careless sinner. We put him under oath, as in the presence of God, to tell us the plain and simple truth, and we ask him if, in the estimation of his conscience and his sober judgment, his soul is not of infinitely more value than all things beside? He answers in the affirmative. We ask him again, if, while he neglects the salvation of his soul, or defers it to some future season, he does not feel guilty and self-condemned for his presumptuous conduct? Again he frankly

answers *in the affirmative*. It is enough—his testimony is to the point—it is clear—it is decisive. We call up *another:*

The sinner under conviction. Anxiety is on his countenance, and paleness sits upon his brow, and the tear trembles in his eye as he approaches. Tell us, fellow-mortal, what do *you* think is the value of the soul? "Oh! I would give thousands of worlds for an interest in the great salvation—thousands of worlds, for the assurance that my sins were pardoned—that *my soul* were safe for eternity!" It is enough—let him retire to bewail his sins before God, while we summon *another* to come before us. To come to *us*, did I say? No—we must go *to him*—it is

The sinner in a dying hour; and we must take his deposition from lips quivering in death. Tell us, departing spirit, gasping on the verge of eternity—tell us the value of the immortal soul. "Soul—immortal soul, did you say? Ah! I have sinned away my day of grace—God is my enemy—*my soul* is lost!—lost forever. Oh! the insufferable pangs of endless death!" A single stifled groan, and all is over, and his spirit has gone to the fearful retributions of eternity! Well—follow that departing spirit, down to perdition, and call up from that dark abode, *another* witness:

The sinner in hell. Long has he been drinking in the dregs of righteous wrath—suffering the just punishment of his sins, and his aspect is that of a being who is "worn and wasted with enormous wo." Ask *him* "what is the value of the soul?" But he hears you not. He is lifting up his eyes in torment, and crying to Abraham who is afar off, to have mercy on him, and to send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool his tongue from the torments of the flame. Well—speak to him again—again ask him the value of the soul. He groans out in bitter anguish, "Who can dwell with devouring fire?—who can inhabit everlasting burnings? Oh! the gnawings of the undying worm!—Oh! the horrors of the second death! Are they forever?" And the dark caverns of despair, in prophetic accents, echo back, "FOREVER." You have heard enough to know *his* opinion of the worth of his soul, which he now feels has been self-destroyed, and that eternally. Let us summon *another* witness:

The humble Christian. He replies to your inquiry, that the value of the soul is infinite; and that for the whole material universe he would not relinquish the hope, that *his own soul* will be saved. Listen also to the testimony of *another:*

The dying saint. There he lies upon the bed of death—but death to him is stripped of its terrors and deprived of its sting. The world is receding from his view, and eternity is rapidly drawing near. But he has no fears for the future, for his spirit is filled with joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. In the sentiment of the dying Payson, the celestial city is full in his view—its vivid glories beam upon his enraptured vision—its breezes fan his feverish cheek—its odours are wafted around him—its ravishing sounds strike upon his ears—its blessed spirit breathes through his heart. He is almost impatient to be gone. His soul is "striving with an angel's energy," and "with an angel's feeling" too, to break through the clay walls of its prison-house, and rise to the blessedness of the just made perfect. But he stays this side of eternity a little longer. Draw nearer then, in stillness, and ask him, now on the

very verge of heaven, what is *his* estimate of the value of the soul. Though his voice may be silent, the joy that beams in his countenance and the ecstasy that thrills his spirit, speak in unearthly eloquence of its infinite importance. Your question is more than answered. One more witness, and our evidence is closed. We call for the testimony of

The saint in heaven. Go to yonder redeemed spirit before the throne, who, from the exhaustless fountain, is drinking in his full of transport, and knowledge, and holiness. Bid him descend from that world of glory, and come before us, and testify to the value of the human soul. True, he might feel reluctant to leave that blessed abode, for these dark regions of sin and wo. But bid him put off his robes of light, and lay aside his crown of glory, and hang his harp upon the willows of heaven, and come and inform us what is the value of the soul. He tells us that we can never fully estimate it, till we reach the world of spirits—till we calculate it in the arithmetic of heaven or of hell. But with deep solemnity and earnestness he reiterates the language of the blessed Saviour, "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" And again he tells us, "That the redemption of the soul is precious, and it ceaseth forever." And scarcely have the last accents of the declaration fallen from his lips, when he wings his joyful flight back again to heaven —his blessed, his endless home.

Such are the witnesses, whose testimony to the value of the soul, is briefly but candidly before you. As witnesses, they are competent—they are credible. Cross-examine them as you will, and their testimony is still the same. They are self-consistent, and mutually harmonious; and they unanimously agree, that "the redemption of the soul is precious," that its salvation is of infinite moment. This leads us to

II. The second general truth included in the words that have been quoted, viz.: THAT IN THE EXISTENCE OF EVERY IMPENITENT PERSON, THERE IS A PERIOD, BEYOND WHICH, THERE IS NO HOPE OF HIS SOUL'S SALVATION. "*It ceaseth forever.*" And,

1. All hope of its salvation ceases *at death.* If it be unconverted *then*, it never *can be* converted; if without salvation *then*, it is unsaved forever. As the tree falls, so it lies; and as death leaves the soul, so judgment and eternity find it. Again,

2. *When the unpardonable sin has been committed* by any individual, there is no further hope of his salvation. I stop not to inquire as to the nature of that sin, or the reason why forgiveness is denied to it. It is sufficient for our warning, that *after* its commission, there is no further hope for the soul.

3. The same is true of the period *when the Holy Spirit ceases to strive with the heart.* When his blessed influence is withdrawn, hope sets to rise no more; and though the individual may not know it, yet from that moment the gates of heaven are shut against his soul, and he is given over to hardness of heart, and blindness of mind, to treasure up to himself wrath against the day of wrath. These are some of the periods in the existence of the impenitent, beyond which there is no hope of their salvation—beyond which, they might well take up the lamentation, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and our souls are not gathered into the garner of heaven!"

Two remarks and I have done. And,

1. If the soul be of unspeakable value, and if it be constantly in danger of passing the limits of salvation, *then this subject calls upon* CHRISTIANS *to make far greater efforts than they are making, for the salvation of their fellow-men.* In God's kingdom of grace no results are brought about, except through the intervention of means. And you, PROFESSING CHRISTIANS, are the co-workers, through whose *active co-operation*, (not *mere passive instrumentality*,) he designs to accomplish his purposes of grace towards the impenitent. And yet what numbers of unconverted persons are there, in your neighbourhood, in your congregation, yes, in your very families, for the salvation of whose souls you are doing little or nothing; and who, if they are lost forever, next to their own guilty negligence, may well charge their ruin *upon you*, and leave the blood of their souls *upon your heads!* I know that some of you may hear this appeal, as though it were a *mere matter of course*, instead of regarding it as an intended exhortation—as a pointed and solemn warning. Many of you, I fear, will tacitly admit the truth of the charge, while you make no resolutions of amendment—while you even think with yourselves, that for the future you will continue to go on just about as you hitherto have done. If you do, it will but add another to the many existing and fearful evidences of the ease of self-deception. Yes, it is a mournful truth, and I write it with sorrow, that probably many *in all our churches* are self-deceived—that probably *many* who *profess* the name of Christ, are passing to the judgment-seat, with no other hope than that of the hypocrite, which shall perish like the spider's web, when God shall take away the soul. They utterly disregard the tremendous responsibilities which they have taken upon themselves by a profession of religion. Their *lives* furnish no satisfying evidence of genuine conversion—of sincere piety. They evince not the slightest regard for the souls of others. They are so absorbed with the world, that they would scarcely know they had souls of their own, were they not reminded of the fact by their occasional visits to the sanctuary. They are in awful danger of being cursed on earth for their unfaithfulness, and of receiving their endless portion hereafter, with hypocrites and unbelievers, amid the blackness of darkness forever! PROFESSING CHRISTIANS, let each one of us ask, in the spirit of deep humility, and of faithful self-examination, "*Lord, is it I?*" By my care for my own soul, and for the souls of others, do I satisfy my own conscience—do I give evidence to all around me, that I am indeed a child of God? O that every professing Christian had far more of what Shaftesbury sneeringly calls, "*the heroic passion for saving souls!*"—that thus they might be more useful to others, and gain clearer evidence of their own title to heaven. Finally,

2. If the soul be of unspeakable value, and if there be a period, beyond which, there is no hope of its redemption, *then the* IMPENITENT *are warned by this subject to attend instantly to the salvation of their souls.* There is a period, as we have seen, beyond which all efforts for the soul are vain and fruitless. FELLOW-SINNER, it is possible—yes, it is more than possible, that you may have reached that limit—it is more than possible, that already you may have sinned away your day of grace—that you may have passed the utmost boundary of all well-founded hope of heaven. I say not that this *is* the fact, but that your stupid apathy, and strange indifference to your immortal interests, afford no small reason

for thinking that it may be the case; still, there is a *possibility* that you may yet be saved. And even the possibility of saving your soul, should rouse you to instant and mighty effort. Yonder is a noble ship—ploughing the billows, under full spread sails. A mariner, unobserved, is swept from her deck into the wide waste of waters. He *knows* that he is unseen; but still he struggles for his existence. The ship passes on—gradually, but rapidly, it recedes from his sight—the last bit of its canvass is dimly seen in the distance—it is gone! Does yonder drowning man relinquish his efforts, or give way to despair? O no! As the ship fades from his view, and the last ray of hope is quenched in the clouds of gathering death, he struggles on, and struggles on, with all the energy of a dying man, till, from mere exhaustion, he sinks, to rise no more! Before that poor mariner, there was no prospect of rescue—no prospect of life—and yet he struggled on to the last, from the very instinct of his nature. *Mariner for eternity!* there is yet a *possibility* that *you* may be saved! The grave has not yet closed over you—you are yet in a state of probation—you are yet out of hell! Rouse then, to the effort, all the energies of your nature; agonize for your immortal existence—for your never-dying soul, if perchance it may yet be saved!

SERMON CCXIX.

By Rev. EDWIN HOLT, Charleston, South Carolina.

UNION OF CHRISTIANS ESSENTIAL TO THE WORLD'S CONVERSION.

John xvii. 21. *That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the* WORLD MAY BELIEVE *that thou hast sent me.*

The following statement was made by the late Robert Hall, not many years since:—"Christian Societies, regarding each other with the jealousies of rival empires, each aiming to raise itself on the ruins of all others, and scarcely deigning to acknowledge the possibility of obtaining salvation out of their pale, is the odious and disgusting spectacle which modern Christianity presents."

So true is it, unhappily, that the followers of Christ are not "one." But is the idea of their cordial union entirely extravagant? Is it weakness and folly to suppose that Christians may be one? Is such a suggestion too absurd to come from any but fond and simple schemers, whose goodness of intention is allowed to apologize for the shallowness of their views?

The Redeemer did not deem union of some kind among his followers ridiculous or unattainable. He actually prayed that his disciples, then living, and all who should believe on him, "through their word, might be one."

To what extent, then, may Christians, in accordance with this prayer, be united? May the denominational barriers, which now fence off the sacramental host into various sections, be taken down? It is perhaps unreasonable to expect, or rather, it requires strong faith to believe, that all these barriers can soon be laid aside, even though it was the Saviour's prayer that his followers might be entirely one.

But if we may not hope that the various sects of Christendom will be soon merged into one body, may they not become "one" to a much greater extent than they now are? And if the conversion of the world to Christianity is to follow the union of Christians, and is to be a result of their oneness, as the prayer of the Redeemer would lead us to expect, the subject, surely, may well deserve the attention of His friends.

If the various sects were like, what they have been fondly said to resemble, the co-operating sections of a complete army, the mounted and unmounted men, the light and heavy armed regiments; the various divisions that retain their own distinguishing flags, while they march under the same national banner; each promoting the objects of the campaign, in perfect concurrence with the others: if this scene were the real state of the Christian army, we might, perhaps, rejoice that the division of sects had taken place. Unfortunately, however, the various detachments of the Christian host are so intent upon sectarian aggrandizement, that they do not co-operate, as sects, in any general plan to further the cause of Christ. The just representation of the sects of Christendom would be, rather, that of various detachments of a great army, each bent so much upon its own enlargement as to lose sight, in a great measure, of the common purpose; each prouder of the flag of its own division than of the common banner of the Cross; each so intent upon its own growth, though at the expense of the next division, as to have neither time nor zeal to give to the common cause; and that, too, when a powerful and active foe presses, on all sides, upon the distracted camp.

While we entertain such views, how can we regard the existence of sectarian establishments as a blessing to the cause of Christ? A blessing they may prove to that cause, but it will be only as pestilence and war prove beneficial to the world.

Two leading inquiries are suggested by the text: I. To what extent may Christians "be one?" II. How will their union advance the conversion of the world?

The first inquiry is, To what extent may Christians "be one?"

1. They may "be one" in devotion to a common interest.

The mariner is known from the landsman by his devotion to the sea; the soldier from the common citizen by devotion to military life; the scholar from the unlettered man by devotion to books, and the Christian from the worldling by devotion to the cause of Christ. Cordial interest in the advancement of the Redeemer's cause is essential to Christian character. Devotion to this object may be a harmonizing characteristic of Christians. Indeed union in this respect is essentially required by the very nature of Christianity. Her banner is the same in every quarter of the globe, and in every detachment of her forces. Her designs and purposes never vary. Devotion to her interests, then, may be a common and uniform feature in her followers. How widely soever they

differ in age, taste, location, and secular pursuits, they may be alike in devotedness to the same great cause—the cause of Christ.

In the varying constituents of a ray of light, the different colors harmonize perfectly. Their differences are maintained in such subordination to the general object, that the diversity of hues is not known until the aid of an optical instrument is procured. May not Christians become so united in devotion to a great common interest, that the existence of any diversities would not be detected without scrutinizing search? Their oneness of aim in advancing the common cause may, surely, be so obvious as to throw entirely into the shade the diversities that now stand out with so much prominence.

Christians may become "one," under the influence of devotion to a common interest, just as patriots, who differ in all the circumstances of life, are formed into a predominating oneness of character by engaging upon the same battle-field, from attachment to the same country. Armed to support a common cause, they cannot listen to the weak jealousies of the evil-minded. They are one in heart, for they jeopard life and consecrate their blood for the same country. Christians, surely, may be thus united by devotion to the Redeemer's cause. They may thus be "one."

A ruling passion, like the devotedness of the Christian, pure and ennobling, has no disuniting tendency. Whatever it is that separates the Redeemer's friends into various sects, we may be sure it is not devotion to His service. This only binds together congenial spirits. Indeed, it is matter of astonishment that hearts, professedly swayed by supreme love to the Saviour, have ever indulged towards each other a single prejudice. Surely, it must be only when this principle is weak and defective, that jealousies can disunite the friends of Christ.

Devotedness to the common Saviour may gain such an ascendency in the hearts of Christians, as utterly to subdue all those unworthy influences, that lead to rivalry and discord. It may fill the soul with its hallowed influences, and may pour into the stream of life such a current of holy energy, as will bear down in its resistless course every rising jealousy, every selfish scheme, every disorganizing suggestion.

2. Christians may "be one" in affection to each other and to the general church.

If the separating walls of denominational peculiarities must continue, cordial fellowship may still cement the hearts of Christians. Different sects may "love one another with a pure heart, fervently." The calamities of one may be deplored as the calamities of all; the success of one may be welcomed as the success of all; the assailants of one may be treated as the assailants of all. Such may be the degree of sacred fellowship, that when one member of the general body suffers, all the members will suffer with it. All Christians may regard each other as members of the same holy brotherhood, "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." They may "be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus." They may "with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." They may "all speak the same thing," "be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." "Having compassion one of another," they may "love as brethren." Thus may they have true "fellowship, one with another," as well as with Christ.

3. Christians may "be one" in their efforts for the conversion of men.

Their exertions may be directed, as we have seen, to the same end, the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. To this object may their exertions be directed in common modes of operation. If the hand cannot perform the duties of the foot, it may yet perform its own functions in harmony with the foot. Every member of the Christian body may be employed in its sphere; and the united exertions of all may be made to bear with great power upon the general advancement of religion in the world.

They may be so intent upon this great object, that they cannot fall out by the way in their modes of operation. They may labour without rivalry, without wasting in discussion the time that should be spent in action, without expending on each other the energies that are needed for conflict with the world and the common enemy. Solemnly impressed with the nearness and the awfulness of eternity, animated by the glories in prospect, burning with zeal for God, they may co-operate, side by side, in the noble work, each willing to be the servant of all, each ready to emulate, admire, and rejoice in the well-doing of all. Thus united, the church may look forth, "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners."

Did not the Redeemer believe that his followers might work together in his service? Did the union, for which he prayed, contemplate no concert of action? Was it to be union in principle, but not in exertion? Was it to be union that could consist with contentious struggles for sectarian objects?

May not Christians, then, be one, so far as to co-operate in plans of religious enterprise? and may not modes of operation be adopted with special reference to this point? Did the Redeemer ever suppose that plans of action, intended to secure the cordial union of all who love Him, were impracticable?

4. Christians may "be one" in prayer.

The petition, "Thy kingdom come," may, without a dissenting feeling, go up in one harmonious aspiration from the whole church. Upon all the efforts to distribute the word of God, upon the labours of all missionaries of the cross, the blessing of heaven may be implored by the whole body of Christians. The evils that afflict or impede the cause of Christ, the want of labourers in the vineyard, the mighty obstacles that oppose the progress of truth, may be urged with one voice, before the throne of infinite grace and power. Christians may thus exert the omnipotence of united prayer.

If the friends of the Redeemer may not be united in the forementioned particulars, how can they "be one" in any sense? And if, in these respects, they were cordially united, minute differences of doctrine and of organization, conscientiously maintained by various sects, would not destroy the peace of the church at large; the evils of sectarianism would actually cease.

II. We are next to show how such union may commend and rapidly advance the cause of true religion.

1. When Christians are thus one, they will waste no portion of their efforts on each other. *Then*, if denominational differences must continue, they will not be suffered to diminish the general amount of Chris-

tian effort, any more than innocent and salutary recreation will really diminish the common and useful labours of busy life.

Look at the amount of energy that is now expended for mere sectarian purposes. Enumerate the plans that are formed, the sermons that are preached, the books that are printed, the sums that are given, the churches that are built for such purposes. Compute the vast amount of effort that is thus put forth, not in promoting the common cause, but in perpetuating separation, weakness, and strife among those who by their religion are bound to be one, and for whose union the Redeemer has fervently prayed. Is it not desirable that this mighty aggregate of wasted resources should all be consecrated to the cause of Christ—should all bear directly upon the advancement of Christianity?

Some of the best talents in the church have been employed in almost every age, in the discussion of the merely denominational differences which exist among evangelical Christians. Undoubtedly, this employment of the energies of good men has in some instances subserved the cause of truth. But when we reflect upon the vast amount of talent and of zeal that have been thus expended, and especially when we reflect that many points have been fiercely and laboriously disputed for fifteen centuries; and that they are as unsettled now as they have ever been, may we not believe that the benefits of controversy would have been at least as well secured, indirectly, if the discrimination, the zeal, and the learning that have been devoted in such great proportions to the discussion of controverted topics had been employed directly for the conversion of men? Says one of the master spirits of the age, "I would even hazard the prediction that ere five years have elapsed, after a public union of all sincere Christians has been effected, scarcely a doubt will remain on any theological or practical question that can be deemed at all important. It is, I think, a most delusive expectation, entertained by some persons, that the peace of the church will be effected by the *argumentative* determination of existing controversies. Is it not much more probable that a revival of fervent piety will, if the phrase may be used, fuse the church into a state of union, and that then the spirit of discrimination and of sound judgment in doubtful matters shall be conferred upon it?"

And if the time, talents, and treasure, that are now expended in maintaining with exquisite jealousy, and with warlike spirit, favourite peculiarities, were all employed in the simple exhibition of the Gospel, how greatly would the conversion of the world be accelerated!

Let the friends of truth do all in their power to elucidate the truth, but not with unhallowed warmth, not to the neglect of direct efforts for the salvation of a ruined world. While the church is agitated and absorbed with ecclesiastical disputes, the world is perishing. While the church is disposed to slumber, wearied by exhausting contentions, even among her watchmen, an enemy is sowing, with ever wakeful activity, the seeds of sin and death, over that broad field which the church has been solemnly commanded to cultivate. If you have succeeded in bringing to the shore a few of the unfortunate men, whose ship is sinking, is it better to spend time in fixing their future habitations than to seize the present moment for snatching others from death?

2. When Christians become "one," their efforts to extend the influence of the Gospel over the world, besides being more direct to their object,

will be of a purer character—unmixed with jealousy, envy, or other evil passions.

Can the efforts of a contending church, to convert the world, be pure in God's sight, and thus have his blessing? At present, her efforts are most sadly embarrassed, and her treasures unnecessarily expended, from the want of mutual confidence. Different organizations are now established, side by side, professedly to promote the same object. Yet they act with as little counsel and co-operation as if one had for its object the destruction, another the advancement, of the cause. Missionaries from the same country are sent to the same field by different boards. Two exploring agents, without any concert, or design of concert, have recently been sent from this country to Persia, on the same errand, by boards of different denominations. Entirely separate theological seminaries are endowed, separate presses are established for the preparation of tracts and religious books, from a jealousy that the bread of life would be ruined by the co-operation of its friends. Even Bibles, as well as other books, of acknowledged excellence, have begun to be suspected, unless the title-page avers that they have been printed with sectarian types and have been bound by favourite hands. In every village several churches must be erected and several ministers employed—when a single building and a single minister would be sufficient, if no sectarianism existed—and thus men of God, who might evangelize the heathen, are retained where they are not needed at the bidding of unchristian jealousy!

To such an extent does unhallowed strife seem to be gaining ascendency with some, that they almost overlook the great business of saving the world. Varying parties are so much engrossed in correcting their mutual errors and in considering their perhaps, trivial differences, as almost to forget the fatal errors of unconverted men and of dying nations. They are so fully occupied in mutual acts of hostility, and in mutual self-defence, as to resemble the jarring host that was besieged in Jerusalem, just before its final destruction—with this exception, that even the presence of the overpowering enemies of the church does not drive to mere occasional union the conflicting forces of our Zion. We dwell on our own varying and favourite interests, forgetful of a perishing world! O, how can the nations ever learn that the Son of God came from heaven to save guilty man, while jealousies thus rankle in the bosom of the church! But let Christians become "one," and their efforts to save the world, besides being thus concentrated upon one point, will gain immense efficiency from the absence of all those jealousies which now distract and enfeeble their plans and efforts.

3. When Christians become "one," their prayers will be such as to secure the blessing of Almighty God, to an extent which it is now unreasonable to expect.

Once the Christian church were "of one accord." It was when the one hundred and twenty disciples at Jerusalem "continued instant in prayer." There were no jealousies among these primitive believers. Rich and poor, old and young, male and female, learned and unlearned—they were all "of one accord"—"of one mind." No jarring note disturbed the harmony of their aspirations. No desire of individual aggrandizement intruded upon their worship; no strife for pre-eminence, no private partialities, no disgust towards one another, no envying, no alienation, quenched the spirit of prayer. In a short time the result was gloriously

manifest. The speedy conversion of three thousand, illustrated the immense power of united prayer.

Why are not similar displays of Divine grace witnessed now? Is it not because the same united, persevering prayer is not now offered?

Look at the demeanor of different classes of Christians towards each other—their distrust, their jealousies, their collisions. Observe how they watch for the halting of each other; observe the acrimony that characterizes their discussions. Notice the spirit with which varying parties, even of the same denomination, contend for their respective views. Look over the whole church, and mark the diversities of sentiment and of practice, that prove the sources of sad irritation within the pale of every sect. Is it wonderful that prayer, ascending from such divided and conflicting hearts, is not heard? Indeed, how can the prayers of discordant petitioners be granted, without making the request of one neutralize and counteract that of the other?

If, when divided by alienations and rivalries, the friends of Christ pray for the blessing of God upon their efforts to convert the world, is it at all strange that the petition is unheeded? "If two of you," said the Redeemer, "shall *agree* on earth, as touching any thing they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." And if all that love the Lord Jesus Christ should agree in offering earnest petitions for the conversion of men, how speedily would the promised submission of the world to Christ fill the earth with joy, and call forth thrilling hosannas from all the heavenly hosts!

4. Let Christians be seen to "be one," and the *example* of their mutual attachment and harmonious co-operation will prove a powerful means of advancing the Redeemer's cause.

At present, the consequences of want of concert in the missionary efforts of various classes of Christians are not seriously felt. The evils resulting from this source, however, are beginning to show themselves. And should the attention of the heathen be generally awakened, they would notice, with perfect amazement, the present want of harmony among the disciples of the Redeemer. How could this discovery fail to degrade Christianity in their estimation, and to call forth prejudice and contempt? If missions could survive such a disclosure, in the eyes of the heathen, of what we all know to be true, still they could be expected only to spread farther and wider in the world the same unhallowed divisions. They would everywhere sow tares with the wheat.

Let the missionaries of various denominations, now in India, be as successful as the single-hearted Swartz was. Let them succeed in overthrowing idolatry in one of the principal cities of India. Let them proceed then to erect Christian institutions upon the ruins of paganism. Each will naturally wish to establish his own sectarian form of Christianity. The Wesleyan will erect his chapels, and invite the converted Hindoos to adopt Wesleyan Christianity. The representative of the Church of England will plead for the liturgy and the rites to which he is himself attached. The Congregational or Presbyterian missionary will condemn both the measures of Methodism and the forms of Episcopacy. "Mine," he will affirm, "is the more correct pattern of primitive Christianity." "No," says the zealous Baptist, "those worthy brethren are *all* wrong—at least on one point. You must enter our

church, you must be re-baptized, you must confine yourselves to our communion."

Sectarian establishments would thus cover the land, reclaimed from paganism, with the same noxious growth of jealousies and contentions that burden our own soil. Is it desirable to extend thus the evils of sectarianism over the world? Will the great Head of the church tolerate and favour the diffusion of a divided Christianity? Will he suffer the seeds of perpetual discord to be thus mingled with the forming elements of the gospel in every land? Is not the diffusion of sectarianism to be deprecated? Will it not retard instead of hastening the triumph of Christ's cause? Must not Christians then become "one," before the signal favour of Heaven will crown their efforts?

The prejudicial influence of the example of disunion among Christians is clearly seen in its effects upon the minds of the unconverted at home. These, as well as the distant heathen, need conversion. Their conversion, however, is hindered, perhaps, more by the inconsistencies and discords of Christians, than by all other causes. Their taunting plea is, "When Christians shall be agreed among themselves what Christianity is, we will give it a hearing." Christ is thus terribly wounded in the house of his friends.

If it be replied, that there is substantial agreement among Christians, and that they disagree only on minor points, the statement calls forth the prompt demand, "Why then do you dispute upon points confessedly unessential with acrimonious feeling and vindictive warmth, and keep up, for ages, the unhallowed warfare? How can such discord consist with the avowed belief of the infinite importance of Christianity?" This reasoning of sinners proves, in too many instances, an impenetrable shield against the force of truth, entreaty, and remonstrance. It is a shelter under which multitudes remain unalarmed. But let Christians become "one," and they remove from the impenitent this shield—they drive them from this shelter which only threatens their ruin. Let discord among Christians cease, and their bright example would act with resistless influence upon all around. It would give new energy to their appeals, new lustre to their lives, new success to all their efforts. It would wrest from the caviller his favourite weapon. It would paralyze the energies of the scoffer. It would confound and silence the skeptic. It would remove the saddest perplexities of the conscientious inquirer.

The new and glorious spectacle of a great body of believers, entirely free from factions and from rivalry, imbued with the pure spirit of their Lord, fully united in heart and in effort, concentrating with unbroken harmony all their benevolent exertions, maintaining thus their true character, as the light of the world—such a scene would prove the most forcible and successful inculcation of the gospel ever witnessed. It would at once multiply a thousand fold the efficiency and success of all Christian efforts.

A gentleman in South Carolina, who resides in a district where several evangelical sects maintain each its separate worship, desired to profess religion. He loved the Saviour; and he enjoyed the confidence of Christians of different denominations. But he did not dare to make a public profession of his faith. Why! Because he feared the reproach of the world? Not at all. This he did not fear; nor could he meet with this difficulty in his circumstances; for the chief influence of the

neighbourhood was on the side of religion. Why then was he afraid? Because he must incur the displeasure of his neighbours of different denominations as soon as he should identify himself with any particular church. As a non-professor, he enjoyed the Christian confidence of all, and mingled with them freely in the courtesies of social life. If connected with any one sect, he knew well, that he was instantly dissevered from the friendly regards—not of men of the world—but of professing Christians, and good men too, of other sects. He must not profess Christ in one church, lest he should draw upon himself the uncharitableness, the suspicions, and the censures of other churches! The dilemma in which he was placed, was a trying one. Conscience urged him, a man of peace, to confess his Saviour before men; but to do this, in his situation, was to embroil himself with professed Christians, who were not charitable enough to love one another! And is it come to this! Must good men be repelled and kept back from the communion of Christians, not by the frowns of the world, but by the animosities of the church?

Let Christians be one, and the best efforts will be made, and made in the best manner, for the conversion of the world. The number of devoted missionaries will be multiplied. The hackneyed plea that much is to be done at home, will not then check the missionary enterprise. The union of Christians will do more to convert men at home, than all the heralds of salvation, who are labouring among the Heathen could do, if they had devoted their lives to this object. And the attention of the churches and their prayers would then be given in undiverted fulness to the work of saving the unevangelized world. The church would have but little to do besides converting the Heathen. And since a purer Christianity would be diffused, and an approving God would then smile upon the efforts of his united people, the announcement would soon be made from heaven, "the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ."

Such are some of the advantages of union among Christians. Will not the real friends of the Redeemer seize joyfully these advantages? Magnify, to the highest degree, the benefits of sectarian estrangement, they dwindle into the most dwarfish insignificance when contrasted with the blessings lost to the Redeemer's cause by such estrangement. Would you weigh the salvation of the world against the advantages of sectarianism? Will you cling to these advantages, questionable as they are, though you assume, by so doing, the fearful responsibility of deciding that the world shall not yet be evangelized? UNION AMONG CHRISTIANS, OR THE PERPETUATION OF PAGANISM AND INFIDELITY is the alternative that now demands the attention of the church. It was that the world might know the Gospel, that the Redeemer prayed for union among his followers. And does not the imperfect success of modern missions confirm the representation that Christians must be one, or the world will not be converted?

The Israelites, when ordered back to the wilderness by their offended Lord, would have gone forward to take possession of the promised land, at the margin of which they were then encamped: but the message from God was, "Go not up—neither fight, for I am not among you." So while the camp of the Christian Israel is torn with dissensions, of what avail is it to talk of going forth to convert the nations? Must not the God of Israel refuse to accompany such a camp, in such an undertaking?

Does he not say, plainly, by his providence, "Go not up to convert the world by means of sectarian efforts—for I am not among you?" Is it not His first message, "Cease to do evil, learn to do well?" "Put away the iniquity" of your disunion "from before mine eyes." Banish your rivalries and contentions forever. Be of one accord—of one mind. Then shall ye call, "and I will answer you." Then the God of Israel shall go with you into the missionary enterprise, "as a pillar of cloud by day, and a pillar of fire by night." "One shall then chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight." Nations shall be born in a day. Then shall the hastened conversion of the world call forth from every mouth, the general acclamation, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

I repeat it, then;—UNION AMONG CHRISTIANS, OR THE PERPETUATION OF PAGANISM AND INFIDELITY, is the alternative that now demands the attention of all Christ's friends.

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SERMON CCXX.

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THE EXCEEDING SINFULNESS OF SIN.

Romans vii. 13. *That sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful.*

A strong proof of the universal depravity of the human heart is furnished by its great insensibility to the evil of sin. While the threatenings of God's word, the judgments of his hand, and the destructive tendencies of sin, loudly proclaim its exceeding sinfulness, men generally look upon it with feelings of stoical indifference, and even fondly cherish in their bosoms this most malignant and implacable foe. To a reflecting and benevolent mind it can be no less a matter of astonishment than grief, to see beings, destined to an immortal existence, trifling with *sin*, that relentless enemy that is binding them hand and foot in chains of adamant, and preparing to drag them down to the prison of unending woe. You would at once condemn the folly of the man who should place a deadly serpent in his bosom; but are you not, at the same time, fondly pressing to your bosoms an enemy which "at the last biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder;" and which fastens its fangs with a much surer aim and deadlier grasp? *Sin* inflicts a wound, which, unless seasonably treated by the "balm of Gilead," will unevitably bring upon you the everlasting agonies of "the second death." If the "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," surely to cast off fear, to disregard his authority, and to treat *sin* with indifference must be the extreme of *madness*. Reason and Scripture, experience and observation, all furnish the most incontestible evidence that sin is most malignant in its nature, and most destructive in its consequences. Yet strange to tell, thousands, upon whom the Gospel has poured its heavenly light, can still live in a state of entire sinfulness without dread apprehensions of future retribution. And even those, who have experienced something of its bitterness, and have mourned over it with a godly sorrow, do not maintain a sufficient watchfulness over the multiplied movements of this treacherous and cruel foe. Though they are not under the "dominion" of sin, they are not exempt from its rigorous attacks, or beyond the reach of its malignant shafts.

It may therefore be profitable to consider, under some variety of illustration and proof, *the exceeding sinfulness of sin.*

The expression "that sin might become exceeding sinful," is peculiarly energetic, and is no doubt employed by the Apostle, to express in the strongest

possible manner, the exceeding *criminality* of sin. As this is a very forcible, and at the same time a Scriptural expression, I shall retain it in illustrating the subject before us. In illustrating the exceeding sinfulness of sin, I remark,

I. *Sin is a rejection of the most reasonable claims.* That a *parent* has claims upon the affections and obedience of his *child* will not be disputed. But whence do these acknowledged claims originate? Evidently in the *relations* that subsist between them. The parent is, in a subordinate sense, the author of the child's existence—has watched over it during the defenceless period of its infancy—has relieved its necessities—and has made it the object of anxious and unceasing solicitude. The parent therefore has strong claims upon the child. These relations constitute a claim which all mankind have been ready to acknowledge. But if a *parent* has such high claims upon his child, has not *God* infinitely *higher claims* upon the creatures of his hand? If such high claims result from an earthly relation, who can estimate the strength of those claims that result from the relation that exists between God and his creatures! He is in the highest sense the author of their existence. His skillful hand has formed and fashioned them. His Spirit has breathed into them the breath of life—has endowed them with all those noble powers and faculties which exalt them to the rank of rational beings—and has given them an existence, that shall endure when the earth shall have been consigned to the fires of the last day, and when suns and stars shall have ceased to shine in the firmament of heaven. His watchful eye has followed them all along the path of life, his protecting arm has been thrown around them to defend them from danger, and his bountiful hand has been extended to crown their years with his goodness ever since they came from his creating hand. Hence the claims of God upon men are paramount to all others. They are the creatures of his hand and the objects of his preserving care. He has therefore a property in them that can never be alienated. He is hereby entitled to their warmest affections and their undivided services. They are under the highest possible obligations to consecrate their powers, their time, their influence, their talents, their property, their *all* to his service and glory. These obligations they cannot violate, these claims they cannot reject, without subjecting themselves to the fearful charge—"*Ye have robbed me.*" Now *sin* is the *actual rejection* of all these high and rightful claims. It is violating the infinite obligations you are under to serve your Creator. It is trampling on the sacred rights of Jehovah. It is setting up your own inclinations, and your own private interests, in opposition to the glory of God, and the infinite claims he has upon the obedience of his creatures. And who can estimate the guilt of thus robbing God? Who can compute the malignity of that spirit that would dissolve all moral obligation, and strip the Creator of all the property he possesses in the creatures of his power? Yet this is *sin*—must it not then be exceeding sinful?

II. *Sin is rebellion against the authority and government of God.* For an individual to oppose the rightful authority of the government under which he lives is universally pronounced highly criminal. Human governments possess a subordinate authority derived from Him whose authority is supreme. They are, according to Scripture, "ordained of God for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well." They are indispensably necessary to secure the rights of individuals—to maintain the general interests of society. Hence to rise up against its rightful authority indicates a heart totally indifferent to the rights of others, and willing to sacrifice the public good upon the altar of selfishness. Hence, too, all unite in condemning the man who tramples upon the sacred authority of law. Especially is this the case where every department of government is conducted with wisdom and

equity—where its laws are good—where its rulers are intelligent and disinterested, and where the combined influence of the whole administration is adapted to promote individual and national prosperity. Rebellion against such a government is at once declaring war with every principle of justice, and indicates a spirit that would unhesitatingly trample upon the rights and interests of the whole community. Now suppose this spirit of rebellion, which is condemned by the unanimous voice of all but criminals, when directed against a wise national government, should be directed against the authority of Him whose kingdom rules over all—and then tell me if it is not clothed with a degree of criminality which baffles all finite conception. While human governments have but a subordinate authority derived from God, his authority is supreme. He is, by an original and inalienable right, King of kings and Lord of lords. The mightiest monarchs of the earth derive all their authority from him, and he claims it as his rightful prerogative to set up one and put down another. He is infinitely exalted above all principality and power, and might and dominion. Clothed with majesty and enthroned in light inaccessible, he sways, uncontrolled and unrivalled, the sceptre of the universe.

At the same time his government is administered with perfect justice and equity. All his proceedings are characterized by infinite wisdom and boundless benevolence. Such is the wisdom and perfection of his government, that every event that takes place, however disastrous in its present aspects, is ultimately rendered subservient to the best interests of his extensive kingdom. He calms the waves of the sea—stills the tumults of the people—and causes the very wrath of man to establish more firmly the foundations of his eternal throne. How immensely important is it then, that his authority should be respected, and his government maintained. His authority being supreme and his government universal, and at the same time so wise and equitable, who can form any adequate conception of the guilt of trampling upon such authority, and rising up in rebellion against such a government? Yet such is the *exceeding sinfulness of sin*. The supreme authority of God is not too sacred to escape its impious contempt, nor is the perfect rectitude of his government too important to be exempted from its malignant attacks. Should sin be suffered to take its course unrestrained, it would utterly subvert the authority and government of God, open a wide door for the entrance of universal anarchy, and spread unbounded desolation over all worlds. Is it not then *exceeding sinful?* Be it remembered, too, that the government of God is *endless in duration*. Human governments can exist only for a limited period, and yet a disregard for their authority is justly considered highly criminal. Immensely more criminal must it be to disregard the authority of God, whose kingdom is to endure *forever*. Add to the perfection and universal extent of God's government, its *endless duration*, and it is invested with an importance truly infinite. Must not *sin* then be *exceeding sinful?* For it is nothing less than positive rebellion against the government of Jehovah, and its direct tendency is, not only to spread present anarchy throughout the universe, but also to perpetuate it through a never-ending duration. It would forever extinguish the light of heaven, annihilate the throne of God, and involve the whole universe in all the darkness and wretchedness of an utter desolation never to be repaired.

III. *The excellence of the divine law*, presents a forcible illustration of the exceeding sinfulness of sin. We have already considered the divine government generally. The excellence of the divine *law* may justly receive a more distinct consideration. "Thou *shalt* love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," is the summary of the divine law as

given by the supreme lawgiver himself. This law, you will at once perceive, is adapted to the capacities of every rational being, and in its binding power is co-extensive with the moral government of God. It is the *unchangeable* and *eternal* law of his kingdom. By the *excellence* of the divine law, I intend more particularly its tendency to promote the happiness of intelligent and accountable beings. Every one can perceive, that it is perfectly adapted to the relations which creatures sustain to God and to each other; and that it demands the highest perfection of moral character. In a world so depraved as ours, that course of conduct which the world has usually honored with the name of *morality*, is justly deemed important to the happiness of the community; and yet it is only in *appearance* what the law of God is in *reality*. Its highest demands may be met by mere outward action, while the *heart* remains under the entire dominion of selfishness. What then must be the happy effects of that pure and spiritual and perfect morality which is the "fulfilling of the law!" Should this law of *love* be written in the hearts and exemplified in the lives of the entire population of the globe, what a wonderful change would it produce in the face of the whole earth. It would be the very image of heaven. That happy world owes its blessedness to the fact, that all its inhabitants yield perfect obedience to this law. Love is the principle that moves every heart, inspires every tongue, and fills every mansion in heaven with songs of rejoicing. Should this same spirit prevail here, the miseries under which the world has groaned and travailed in pain these six thousand years, would be exchanged for the blessedness of paradise. Peace and joy would be the constant inmates of every dwelling, and would spread their heavenly influence through all the habitations of men. The wilderness would blossom as the rose, and moral beauty and loveliness would throw a lustre hitherto unknown over the face of the whole earth. Man would no longer be the foe of man; nation would no longer lift up sword against nation; and revenge, ambition, and war would no longer spread desolation over this ill-fated world. The law of God would bind man to man, and earth to heaven. All men would then love the worship of Jehovah, and the whole earth would be consecrated a vast temple to his praise. God would then look down with complacency upon a renovated world—would remove the curse with which he had righteously visited the apostacy of man—and render the whole earth once more fertile and beautiful as the garden of the Lord. What a wonderful—what a glorious change! Who can estimate the *excellence* of that law which is adapted to banish from the earth the idolatry, the infidelity, the blasphemy, the falsehood, the malice, the cruelty, the ambition, and the wars which have so long held her under the frown of a righteous God; and which can supply their place with piety, and truth, and benevolence, and happiness hitherto unknown? A law that can elevate the character of man to the perfection of angels, and cause the confusion, deformity, and misery of earth to give place to the order, loveliness, and blessedness of heaven!

Now *sin* is the transgression of this law, and so far as it extends, it prevents these glorious results. But this is not all. It directs the whole weight of its influence against the very *existence* of the law, and of consequence against all the holiness and blessedness of God's kingdom. In its direct tendency it would annihilate the holiness and happiness of heaven—multiply without end the miseries of this world—swell beyond calculation the number of the lost, and rally every intelligent creature of God around one common standard of revolt.

IV. *Sin is an abuse of the mercy and forbearance of God.* Insensibility to kindness is universally condemned. The man who feels no emotions of gratitude for peculiar favors from his fellow men, is justly regarded as lost to all the tender feelings of humanity. But to abuse kindness, and to injure a

benefactor evidences a character of unparalleled debasement. What epithet then can express the moral degradation of that character which can abuse the boundless mercy and forbearance of God? The exhibitions of divine mercy towards men have been numberless. Ever since man has revolted from the government of God, he has shown himself to be merciful and gracious. Instead of unsheathing the sword of justice and inflicting immediate vengeance upon a revolted world, he has borne with them nearly six thousand years, and crowned them all with his goodness. But, of all the manifestations of his kindness, that which most displays the infinite fullness of his compassion is the gift of his Son. Here God has exhibited himself to the view of angels and men in the attitude of unparalleled condescension and grace. He stood in no need of our services. He might at once have consigned all the guilty subjects of the apostacy to a righteous retribution, and re-peopled the world with better inhabitants. But love, pure, disinterested, and boundless, provided the Lamb of Calvary to expiate the guilt of a self-ruined world. The glad tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ have long been published to the world, and even now mercy, bearing in her hand the gracious offer of pardon, sends forth from the fullness of a bleeding heart the melting expostulation, "Why will ye die?" But *sin* abuses all this mercy. It is not disarmed of its malignity by all these affecting exhibitions of heavenly mercy. It not only sets at naught the law of God, and bids defiance to his authority and wrath, but also casts a look of inexpressible contempt upon the blood-stained cross of his Son. It still urges its way onward, unawed and unrestrained by the boundless compassion of a crucified Saviour. Yes, from the very cross of Calvary it impiously takes encouragement to continue its desolating course, and should it succeed in extending its fearful ravages over the whole earth, it would plead in justification the mercy of God. Oh! who can estimate the power and malignity of sin? Who could suppose that melting scene of Calvary would fail to divest it of its malignity, and put a period to its triumphs? Who would suppose that the glad news of salvation, proclaimed in this perishing world, could fail to arrest the ear, awaken the attention, and soften the heart of its guilty population?. Yet the fact cannot be questioned, that thousands sit under the joyful sound for half a century, and at last go into eternity, without embracing the pardon so long proffered them. And it is not uncommon for men to plead the very mercy of God, as an excuse for their long protracted rebellion, and then with the utmost effrontery, affect to honor him by pronouncing him *too good* to punish them! Such is the amazing power, such *the exceeding sinfulness of sin!*

V. The *awful effects of sin* in our world bear testimony to its exceeding sinfulness. Look in the first place at its debasing influence upon the *mind* of man. Sin indeed has its seat in the *heart*, and can only *indirectly* affect the intellectual powers; yet its effects upon these are not on this account the less real or pernicious. Through the influence of sin the highest endowments of our intellectual nature are perverted. Though men may still reason correctly respecting subjects merely intellectual, yet in regard to those truths that bring into view their character and obligations, and the various relations they sustain to the moral government of God, their understandings are darkened by prejudice, and selfishness, and hatred of the truth. Thus, to silence the unwelcome accusations of a guilty conscience, they clothe God with a character which they can contemplate without any apprehensions of his wrath. They divest him of all those attributes which make angels rejoice and devils tremble. They are resolved at all events to invest God with a character that shall not disturb them in their sins. To the same cause is to be attributed all the *idolatry* that has existed in this degenerate world. According to inspired testimony, it was "because they liked not to retain God in their

knowledge," that men multiplied to themselves gods that cannot save. Had not *sin* alienated the hearts of men from the worship of the true God, the various forms of idolatry, which have so long enslaved more than half the population of our world, would never have had an existence. Here then we have an exhibition of the debasing influence of sin upon the human mind. Contemplate for a moment millions of rational and immortal beings, through a long succession of ages, prostrating themselves before gods of wood and stone! Next contemplate millions of the same race, upon whom the blessed light of revelation has long shone, and see them laboring to put out the light of the Bible, perverting all its heavenly truths, and divesting God of every attribute that can inspire confidence in heaven, or beget alarm on earth; and then estimate, if you can, the *exceeding sinfulness of sin*. Look, in the second place, at the *miseries* sin has caused in the world. Man, as he came from the hands of his Maker, was holy and happy. He possessed the joys of innocence, and the approbation of God. But *sin* banished him from Paradise, and brought a curse upon the world. From that time onward, sin has reigned, and has been the fruitful source of all the miseries under which the world has so long groaned. And how immensely great has been the amount of suffering endured by the numberless millions of human beings that have lived and died since the apostacy of man! Surely no tongue can express—no pen describe—no finite mind conceive the amount of wo endured by this world's population, since it fell under the frown of a holy God. The earth has travailed in pain for nearly sixty centuries under the accumulated miseries sin has brought upon it. Every breeze has conveyed to our ears the sighs and groans of suffering humanity. Pride, and revenge, and malice have spread, far and wide, lamentions, mourning and wo. Ambition and the love of military fame have slain their tens of thousands upon the field of battle. Conquerors have spread complete desolation over whole kingdoms, and tyrants have urged their way to the throne through the blood of slaughtered millions. At the same time a righteous God has sent his judgments abroad upon the earth. Once to punish a rebellious generation, he deluged the world, and with the exception of a single family, swept its numerous population into a hopeless eternity. At another time he rained down fire and brimstone from heaven, upon five rich and populous, but wicked cities. Through every family in Egypt he spread lamentation and mourning. The Canaanites he delivered up to the sword of Israel. A whole generation of Israelites he doomed to perish in the wilderness. And after he had put them in possession of the land promised to their fathers, he repeatedly delivered them into the hands of their enemies. And at last, when they had filled up the measure of their iniquity, he poured out upon them the vials of his wrath without measure. But time would fail to glance at all the judgments of a righteous God since sin entered the world. Let it not be forgotten here, that these awful effects of sin have taken place in this world of probation, distinguished by the amazing forbearance of God, and the gracious interposition of a mighty Redeemer. What an impressive exhibition then of the exceeding sinfulness of sin must have been made, if the divine forbearance had not been lengthened out, and if the announcement of "peace on earth and glad tidings of great joy," had never been heard in this world of apostacy and guilt!

VI. *The sufferings and death of Jesus Christ furnish another affecting proof of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.* In the view of *angels*, no doubt, this is one of the most impressive proofs of the evil of sin. And could we have a proper view of "the glory he had with the Father before the world was," we might better appreciate the argument. Time however will permit us only to glance at the subject. The design of Christ's death was to *make atonement for sin*. Now, it cannot be disputed that the evil of sin must bear

a general proportion to the value of the sacrifice that was necessary for its expiation. Since then the sacrifice actually made was of infinite value, we infer with certainty that sin is an evil of immense magnitude. This sacrifice, be it remembered, was provided by *Him* against whom sin is commited, who knows perfectly its nature and tendency, and who is qualified to judge how great a sacrifice was necessary. How great then must be the evil of sin, since God judged it necessary to give up his *only begotten Son* as an adequate sacrifice! He who was the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his person; he before whom angels veil their faces, and to whom they render the most exalted ascriptions of praise, must veil his glories in human nature, and die upon the cross, before sin could be pardoned.

Again, *sin was directly* concerned in his death. It was by *wicked* hands that he was crucified and slain. The perfect holiness of his life—the unexampled purity of his doctrines—the disinterested beneficence of his miracles—the infinite importance of his mediation—and the abundant evidence of his Divinity could not save him from contempt, and mockery, and death. Oh, the exceeding sinfulness of sin! Who can estimate the malignity of that spirit which could be satisfied with nothing less than the death of the Son of God? Surely such a spirit, if clothed with omnipotence, would dethrone Jehovah himself, annihilate his moral government, and mingle in one vast heap of ruins the combined holiness, happiness and glory of his universal empire!

VII. To have an adequate view of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, we must also look at its *fearful consequences in the world of retribution.* We have already attempted to trace its effects in this world. But here sin has been kept under *powerful restraints.* We must therefore extend our view to that world where all these restraints will be removed. Here men are restrained by *fear;* but in the world of retribution, so far from being restrained by fear, they will "gnaw their tongues for pain, and *blaspheme* the God of heaven." Here they are extensively restrained by *hope;* but hope will shed no kindly influence upon the dark world of perdition. Here the *love* of *esteem* imposes great restraints upon the depravity of man; but this can have no place in a world where there are no beings whose esteem is of any value.

In this world, too, there have always been some who constitute the "salt of the earth," and preserve it from total moral corruption, but in the world of wo the influence of piety will be unknown. The Spirit of God, too, has greatly restrained the wrath of man here, but this heavenly agent will pay no gracious visit to that out cast world. Here also the Sun of Righteousness has shone; but his cheering beams will never reach that world where reigns the "blackness of darkness forever." What then must be the consequences of sin in a world where every restraint is removed—where the Sun of Righteousness will never shine, and where it will have full opportunity to extend its ravages without interruption and *without end?* But this is not all. *God himself* will inflict exemplary punishment upon the workers of iniquity. The effects which sin itself produces, is not the only source of misery to the lost. The Bible speaks most frequently, and in language most awful of the punishment inflicted directly by the hand of a sin-hating God. The fearful representations of Scripture respecting the wrath of God—the undying worm—the unquenchable fire—the devouring flames—and the everlasting burnings, must not be overlooked in estimating the exceeding sinfulness of sin. Oh! "who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire! Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings!" Even here, no doubt, are some who are daily, hourly exposed to this amazing and hopeless destruction!

Impenitent sinner! there may be but a step between you and that bottomless pit, where burn the quenchless flames of divine wrath! You are rapidly

bending your unconscious footsteps toward that world of intolerable *wo*. The burning lake is extended beneath your feet, and nothing but the forbearance of that God, whom you are hourly provoking by your impenitence and rebellion, keeps you from dropping into it this very moment. Oh then, flee from the wrath to come to an Almighty Saviour. Repair at once to the cross of him who is able to save to the uttermost. Delay not a moment, lest the wrath of God overtake you. The sound of mercy will not always reach your ear. The forbearance of God will not be lengthened out forever. God may soon cut you down and consign you to the burning lake, where the smoke of your torment, ascending up in one vast column forever, will furnish to the universe an everlasting memento of the *exceeding sinfulness of sin!*

SERMON CCXXI.

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NECESSITY AND MEANS OF REGENERATION.

John iii. 3. *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

To beings situated as we are, in the present life, it must be of the utmost importance to know the *terms*, or *conditions*, of salvation—to know what we must *be* and *do*, in order to be saved and happy forever in the future world. The present world is fleeting and transitory. "The fashion of this world passeth away." Consequently, it cannot be of any lasting importance to us to know ever so much, pertaining merely to the present world. But our future state will be literally endless. And we are taught in the Scriptures that our condition in the future life will be radically affected, and even determined, by the characters we sustain here. It is then, as I said, of the *utmost importance*, that we know definitely what characters we must here sustain—know what we must here *be* and *do*, in order to be happy forever in that world to which we are all hastening.

A principal object of the revelation which God has given us, is to communicate this needed information. And one very interesting item of it is communicated by our Saviour in the text. "*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" Except we experience a change so great and radical, as to be properly denominated a *second birth*—a *regeneration*—we cannot be admitted to the heavenly state.

The change here spoken of is the same which, in some places, is denominated a change of heart: "Make you a new heart, and a new spirit." In other places, it is represented as a conversion, or turning from sin to holiness. "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of God." This change is obviously an *inward* change. It is not baptism, or a change of profession, or a mere outward reformation. It pertains primarily and essentially to the *inner man*. And that within us which is changed in regeneration is, not the constitution or faculties of the mind, but the disposition or inclinations of the heart. Persons, subsequent to

regeneration, have the same faculties, bodily and mental—the same understanding, conscience, memory, and will—which they had before; but their moral exercises or affections are different. They love, they choose, they are pleased with, different objects. Their free, moral exercises or affections are changed; and this is the change spoken of by our Saviour in the text. The sentiment of the text is, therefore, this:

PERSONS MUST EXPERIENCE A RADICAL CHANGE IN THEIR MORAL EXERCISES OR AFFECTIONS, IN ORDER TO BE HAPPY IN HEAVEN.

To show the truth of this sentiment, and make it palpable to every hearer, it may be necessary, first, to consider, for a moment, what kind of place heaven is. And, without attempting any labored description of heaven, I would say, in the general (what I doubt not will be assented to by all who hear me) that it is pre-eminently a *religious state.* All the views given of heaven in the Scriptures represent its inhabitants as employed, engrossed, with the interesting and important subject of religion?

This is the subject of their *thoughts* and *studies*, and of their *communications* one with another. Heavenly beings are not thinking, as we too often are in this world, of trade, of speculation, of worldly profit—of buying, and selling, and getting gain. They are not scheming to rise, one above another, in wealth, in splendor, in honor, or in power. Their thoughts are employed upon the infinitely nobler subjects of religion and eternity. They are thinking of God, of his glorious character, perfections, and attributes. They are thinking of Christ;—of the mysteries of his person, and the wonders of his love. With intense and growing interest, they are contemplating the *works* of God, and the displays which these make of his power, his wisdom, and his love. With this view, they ponder the vast work of creation, that stupendous display of Almighty power, which spoke systems, suns, and worlds into being—which formed, established, and peopled the universe. With a still higher satisfaction, they study the works of providence, and learn how things once dark have been brought into the clearest light, and how events which on earth were most mysterious and afflictive have been overruled for the wisest ends. But there is a nobler employment for heavenly beings than studying the works of creation and providence. The wonders of redemption are open before them; and it is into these things, emphatically, that "the angels desire to look." It is the work of redemption—the noblest and best of all the Divine works—which excites the profoundest researches and the most delightful meditations of celestial minds. When, on the ground of the mysterious atonement, they see justice and mercy equally satisfied—see the law honored, God glorified, and sinners saved, they break forth with an ecstasy, of which Paul knew something, when he said, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments! and his ways past finding out!"

And not only do the things of which I have spoken occupy the thoughts of celestial beings, they are the subject of their *communications* one with another. That the blessed spirits above enjoy a mutual, social intercourse, there can be no doubt, although at present we know not the manner in which this intercourse is conducted. They are not *solitary* beings in heaven. They do not muse and meditate alone. They are united in their contemplations and their joys, and have communication one with another the most free, and friendly, and delightful. And the subject of their communications, like that of their thoughts and studies, is wholly spiritual, wholly religious. They converse of God, of Christ, of the Holy Spirit, and of the high interests of the Redeemer's kingdom. They talk of all the works of God, and of the displays which these make of his perfections and glories. They talk of the dealings of God towards them, and adore that faithfulness which has overruled all things for

their good. But more especially is their conversation directed towards the all-interesting topic of redemption. They are never wearied in looking into this mighty subject, and never tired of speaking one to another of "the unsearchable riches of Christ," and of the wonders of that love "which passeth knowledge." With an interest unfelt on earth, they watch the progress of Christ's holy kingdom, and speak of it, and rejoice over it, if but one sinner is truly converted—if but one is added to the followers of the Lamb.

The *joys* of celestial beings, like their conversation and pursuits, are entirely of a religious character. Theirs are not the joys of vain mirth, nor the low pleasures of sense and sin. No, they are religious joys. The heavenly inhabitants rejoice in God. They rejoice in his adorable perfections and character. They rejoice in his holy and righteous government. They rejoice that his counsel shall stand, and that he will do all his pleasure. They rejoice in the all-sufficiency, loveliness, and glory of their Redeemer; in his finished work of humiliation and suffering; and in the stability, prosperity, and assured triumph of his holy kingdom.

The *songs*, too, of celestial beings, are all spiritual—songs of adoration and praise. When the heavens were opened to the prophet Isaiah, he heard the seraphim singing, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory." When the heavens were opened to the astonished shepherds, they heard the angels saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men." And when the heavens were opened to the beloved John on the isle of Patmos, he heard the host above singing, "Worthy is the Lamb, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood." In short, if we wish to form a correct and scriptural idea of heaven, we can, perhaps, best do it, by reading the fourth and fifth chapters of the Revelation of John. For here the curtain is, as it were, drawn aside; the heavens are exposed to the views of mortals; and we are permitted, for once, to look in, and see the occupations of the blessed. There we see the eternal throne, and the eternal Jehovah seated upon it. There are the elders and the cherubim sitting and standing round about the throne, "having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints." In the midst of the throne, there is the Lamb that was slain—the Lord Jesus Christ—a principal object of love, of wonder, and of worship to the celestial throng. At various distances, and in different mansions round about the throne, there are ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands—a great multitude which no man can number—singing with a loud voice, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever."

This, my hearers, is heaven. This is the idea which the Scriptures give of the heavenly state. And it conforms, I presume, to the ideas entertained of heaven by the generality of Christians. We do not expect a Mahomedan paradise. We do not expect a heathen elysium. We do not expect a heaven of carnal indulgence, or of sensual gratification. We are taught in the Scriptures to expect, and we do expect, a heaven of unspotted holiness, of elevated devotion, of fervent and perpetual piety. We expect the heavenly state to be filled up forever with the duties, services, and enjoyments of religion.

Now, the proposition which has been advanced asserts, and it remains for me to prove, that in order to see and enjoy this heaven—in order to be happy in it forever—sinners in a state of nature must experience an entire *change* in the affections of their hearts. Or, in the strong language of our Saviour, "*they must be born again*, in order to see the kingdom of God."

The proof of this sentiment I might rest upon the Scriptures. For the *declaration in* the text, and numerous others of similar import, are plain and

decisive. But really, I think the proposition before us is of a nature to be established even were there no appeal to the Scriptures. I think it may be established by a direct appeal to the consciousness and common sense of individuals.

You have heard the kingdom of heaven described. You have had the means of seeing for yourselves, and knowing, what kind of place heaven is. And now I appeal to you to decide, whether natural, unrenewed men, such as you behold around you in the world, are prepared, in their present character, without a change, to go up into this holy heaven, and be happy there forever.

There is one class, and unfortunately not a small one, whose chief happiness seems to consist in frequenting scenes of mirth, and noise, and riot, and vice. They love the loud laugh, the oath, and the midnight revel. They tell you, that their hearts are set upon such things, and they think that they cannot be happy without them. And now I appeal to you to decide, whether such persons are prepared, without a change, to go up into heaven, that holy place which has been described, and set down there, and be happy to eternity. Are their characters at all assimilated to that of heaven? Have they the least fitness for the enjoyments of heaven? And is it not of absolute necessity that *their* hearts be changed, in order to see the kingdom of God?

There is another class, who are under the control of the basest passions. Their hearts are filled—to overflowing often—with malice, envy, revenge and rage. Or I may point you to a class, who are altogether *sensual* in their feelings and habits—the creatures of appetite and lust. And both classes die as they have lived, perhaps by violence, or it may be in a debauch, or in a fit of intoxication. And now I ask, what is to become of such persons? Are they prepared, in their present character, to leave their scenes of wickedness on earth—the tippling-house, the brothel, and the field of blood—and go up into heaven, the holy habitation of the righteous, and mingle in their divine employments, and partake of celestial joys?

I may next point you to a more numerous and respectable class of persons, whose external characters are not vicious, but whose hearts are set supremely upon the world. The world, in some form or other, is their god, and they bow down to it and serve it with the most obsequious devotion. This is that about which they think. This is that of which they talk. This is that for which they labor, from one end of the week to the other. If they are successful in their worldly plans and pursuits, they think themselves happy. If they fail in pursuits of this nature, they are miserable. They are scheming and planning, and putting forth the entire energies of body and mind merely for the acquisition of the world. No one can doubt, that there are a great many persons of this description among us and around us; and I ask whether *they* are prepared, in their present state and character, without a change, to close their eyes upon that world which they so much love—to bid it an eternal farewell—and to go into heaven—that holy, spiritual place, where no sordid desire or earthly affection can ever enter, and dwell there, and be happy there, to all eternity.

But I must direct your attention to another class of persons, embracing many of those already described, and many others, who, whatever else they love, manifestly have no love for the services of religion. They do not love the Bible. They do not love the religious meeting, or religious conversation. And they manifest that they have no love for such things, by neglecting them. You do not see them turning over the leaves of the book of God, and pondering its precious contents. You rarely see them in the house of God on the Sabbath, and never in the meeting for religious conference and prayer. They tell you, that they have no love for such meetings, no relish for them, and that

an hour spent in a meeting of this character would be to them a miserable hour. And now I appeal to you, my hearers, to decide, whether persons of this decription—and they are very numerous—are prepared, as they are without a change, to leave the world, and go up to heaven, and unite cordially, delightfully, in those religious services, with which the heavenly state is to be filled up forever? They have no love for such services on earth; and how can they, without a change, enjoy them in heaven? To press the subject of religion home upon them on earth, is to make them miserable;—what then, I ask, must be their condition in heaven?

Another class of persons may be found among us, who, though they do not neglect the services of religion altogether, attend upon them from other motives and for other ends, than because they love them. In this Christian land, a variety of motives may operate to draw persons to the house of God on the Sabbath, aside from a love for the services of God's house. They may go to public worship, because it is customary to go—because it is respectable to go—and because they do not wish to make themselves singular. Or they may go from motives of curiosity, or of display;—because they have something to see, or something to show, or something to say, or something to hear, aside from hearing the truths of the gospel. We all know how it has been with us, in this respect, in times past; and we know very well how it is with others. I only ask, therefore, whether persons of this description are prepared, in their present character, to die, and go to heaven, and be happy there forever? Think you that any will go to heaven for custom's sake, or example's sake, or decency's sake, or for any of those unworthy purposes at which I have hinted? Will any go there who have not a meetness, in point of character, for the holy inheritance of the saints in light? And do the persons, whose characters have been just described, possess in any degree this meetness?

I am aware that most people, under the gospel, are hoping and expecting, by some means or other, to enter heaven when they die. And there are some who flatter themselves that all, of every character, will be admitted to that bright world. But waiving all other objections to such schemes and hopes, is not the one suggested in this discourse insuperable? What kind of place must heaven be, to make all the various descriptions of persons who dwell upon this earth happy, to eternity? And I will even go further and ask, whether you think it possible for God to contrive and construct a heaven, which should make all the inhabitants of this wide world, without a change of character, happy, forever? I admit that God can do whatever is possible to be done—every thing which does not imply a contradiction. But this does imply a contradiction. For, what would make some men very happy, would make others very miserable. What some would like very much, others would not like at all. And it would be manifestly impossible, even for the Supreme Being, with all his wisdom, and love, and power, to contrive and construct a heaven, which should make the entire population of this globe happy, in their present sinful characters, to all eternity. If any doubt this, then let them try it on a smaller scale. Let them see if they can think of any amusement, or pleasure, or business, or pursuit, which would be likely to make all the inhabitants of this town happy, for any considerable length of time. What sources of enjoyment would you propose, my friends—on supposition you had it in charge to make such a proposal—which should meet and unite all the multiform descriptions of character among your fellow-citizens—the industrious and the lazy, the refined and the vulgar, the religious and irreligious, the good and the bad—and make them all perfectly happy, we will say for one year? Do you think it would be possible to make any such proposal? And were you to attempt it, would you not meet with difficulties insuperable?—But the difficulties which you would encounter on a small scale, the great God would

encounter on a much larger scale, in endeavoring to provide an eternal heaven for all the numberless descriptions of character which are found upon the earth.

The necessity of a change of heart, in order to be prepared for heaven, is indeed absolute, and, I had almost said, self-evident. The declaration in the text is evidently true, because our Saviour said it; and it would have been true, if he never had said it. It is true, in the very nature of things. Heaven being what it is, and mankind in a state of nature being what they are, the two never can come together. There must be a change in the one, or the other; and as heaven cannot be changed, and brought down to the groveling views and varied characters and tastes of mortals; it follows that mortals must be changed—must be renewed, and sanctified, and assimilated in their characters to the purity of heaven, or they can never be admitted to that blessed world.

But perhaps it will be said here, "We know we must be changed in order to be prepared for heaven: and we expect to be changed. We expect soon to die; and death is a great change; and very likely this will be all the change that we need. When we have passed through the gate of death, very likely we shall all be purified and prepared for heaven." Now I admit, in reply, that we are all hasting to death, and that death is a great change; but *of what* is death a change? This is the point. Death is a change of circumstances—a change of worlds. In the moment of death, the soul passes out of one world, and enters another; leaves the body, and goes into eternity; but is death *a change of heart?* Is it any where represented in the Scriptures as a change of heart? And I will even go farther and ask, whether there is any thing in this event of temporal dissolution, which has the least tendency or adaptedness to change the heart? A change of heart is a change in the affections, in the moral exercises, of a free, intelligent, and accountable agent. And this change must be accomplished, if accomplished at all, by the instrumentality of truth, presented for the consideration of a rational mind, and set home by the energies of the Holy Spirit. This is the way in which hearts are changed. And now what is there, I ask again, in mere temporal dissolution—the separation of soul and body—which has the least tendency to bring about such a change as this? Manifestly nothing. Accordingly, death is never spoken of as a change of heart; and there is not the least reason to believe that it ever did or ever can, change the heart of any human being? It follows, therefore, that the soul is ushered into the other world, in the same state and character that it departs out of this world. It is just as unprepared for heaven the first moment after it has appeared in eternity, as it was the last moment that it lingered on the shores of time.

But perhaps it will be said again, "We know we must be changed, in order to be prepared for heaven; and we expect to be changed. And if not changed in this life, nor changed in death; we expect to be changed beyond the grave; very likely, the world of wo will be, like this world, a state of trial, a space for repentance, a place where hearts will be renewed, and sins forgiven, and souls sanctified and prepared for heaven." Let us then, my friends, look into this matter; and let us endeavor to look at it calmly and candidly. For this is a subject in which we are all deeply interested, and interested alike. I have no more interest in it than you, and you no more than I.

And here let me inquire, in the first place, whether it is not in accordance with the general current of Scripture representation, to consider this life as the state of probation, and the other as the state of retribution; this life as the seed time, the place where character is formed, and the other as the place, where we are to reap according to that we have sown, and to be rewarded or punished, according to the deeds *done here in the body?* Is not this, I say,

in accordance with the general current of Scripture representation on the subject?

But not to insist upon this: if we will suppose that the world of wo is, like this world, a state of trial, a space for repentance; we must of necessity include all that is fairly implied in such a supposition. We must suppose that the means of grace are enjoyed in that world: for surely, there cannot be conversions without means. We must suppose that the Bible is read in hell, and the gospel preached, and that the Holy Spirit is poured out, and that there are revivals of religion there. All this is necessarily included in the supposition, that that world is, like the present, a place of probation—a place where sinners are born again, and sanctified, and fitted for heaven. And now I ask, do you read in your Bibles of such means and influences being enjoyed in hell? Did the rich man know any thing of them, in his place of torment? Or do those fallen spirits know any thing of them, who are "reserved in chains, under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day?"

But waiving the Scriptural argument, which seems to me decisive, let us look at this subject on the mere ground of reason. Is hell a suitable place, I ask, for the conversion of sinners? Is it at all adapted, in its influence upon those who are confined there, to bring about so desirable a result? Suppose either of you, my hearers, had it in charge, from the constituted authorities of this Commonwealth, to construct a penitentiary, a house of correction, for the reformation, we will say, of juvenile offenders. You wish to construct a prison, where vicious youth may be confined for a while, and enjoy the best moral instruction and discipline, till they are reformed, reclaimed, and fitted to be let out again with safety upon the world. How would you construct your house of correction, so as best to answer this most desirable purpose? Would you so construct it, as to place the young offenders, whom you hoped to reclaim, in the society, and under the example and influence, of old, hardened, and flagrant transgressors? Could you hope, by such a process, to reform them, and make them better? And yet we are told that the all-wise God, because forsooth he cannot bring as many to repentance in this life as he intends to save, turns over vast multitudes of the human family into hell—a great penitentiary or house of correction which he has prepared for the purpose—and there places them in the society, and under the example and influence of devils and damned spirits—the oldest and the most skilled and flagrant transgressors in the universe—to change their hearts, and prepare them for heaven! And now I ask you, my friends, is this reasonable? Does such a theory seem to you reasonable? And on the validity of such a theory are you willing to risk the destiny of your souls?

There are then several important points, which seem to me to have been well settled in the preceding discourse. It has been settled, on the ground, not of Scripture merely, but of common sense—such ground as every one can feel and understand—that all persons, in a state of nature, must experience a radical change in their affections, from sin to holiness, or they never can see the kingdom of God. It has been farther settled, that this change is not experienced in death; for whatever else death may do for us, it has no tendency or adaptedness to change the heart. Nor is the change in question experienced in the world of wo; as there are no influences in that world to make its miserable tenants better, and no changes but from bad to worse. Of course, the change we need must be experienced in the present world, or never. Yes, I repeat it, this great and needed change must be experienced *in this world, or never.* And now it would seem that no further points need be settled, in order to put all those who hear me—every man, and woman, and child, who is not rationally convinced that he has already experienced the necessary change,—in order to put all such persons upon the great work of

securing its accomplishment without delay. You see that the change is of indispensable necessity. Without it, you can never be saved. Without it, you can never enter heaven. You see, too, that it must be accomplished in this life, or never. Yes, *in this life, or never.* And what is your life? "A vapor, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

"An empty tale; a morning flower,
Cut down and withered in an hour."

And, my unconverted hearers, what are you now thinking of? And what are you doing? Here you are, on a little inch of time. A great work is to be accomplished, or your souls are lost. And this work must be accomplished here, or never. Yes, *here, or never.* And can it be, that you are suffering these fleeting, golden moments to pass unimproved? Can it be, that you are busying yourselves with the poor concerns of this narrow life, and suffering the great interests of the soul to lie neglected? When you see yourselves in the midst of the stream, and going down with the resistless current, and just ready to plunge into the abyss below; can it be that you are sporting with the bubbles on the surface, and neglecting that great work without which you know you can never be admitted to the abodes of the blessed?

Do I hear any saying, "We cannot change our own hearts—it is the work of the Spirit to change the heart; and until the Spirit is bestowed, nothing can be done; and we are not to blame?" On this point I have several things to say. And, in the first place, let me remind you, that you and your Maker are here directly at issue. God virtually says to you, in a multitude of passages, that you can, "make you a new heart;" or, which is the same thing, that you can turn off your affections from the world, and fix them on himself; that you can be sorry and penitent for your sins; that you can embrace that Saviour, who stands before you with open arms, saying, "Come, come, for all things are now ready." To perform these indispensable duties, God insists that you have all requisite *natural* power; and that you need the Spirit, not to give you the ability to do what you cannot do, but to make you *willing* to do what you can. Accordingly, in urging the plea of inability, and thus excusing yourselves from blame you are really contesting the point with God, and giving him the lie to his face. You say that you cannot do, and of course are not to blame for neglecting, what he says you can do, and ought to do, and what he declares that he will punish you forever if you refuse to do. This point, therefore, I must leave you to settle, as you can, between God and your own conscience.

But in the second place, I urge, that this plea of inability is with many of you, probably, a mere *pretence,* under the cover of which you hope to escape from the force of truth and the pressure of obligation, and is urged by you with manifest insincerity. My reasons for saying this are, that we do not see you manifesting that degree of feeling and earnestness of endeavor to do what you admit you can do, which we might expect to see, on supposition that your alleged inability to do all that is required, were sincerely and honestly urged. There are certain things which *you admit you can do,* which may have a tendency to promote your preparation for heaven; and now I would ask, whether you are diligently doing even these. You can feel solicitous and anxious on the subject of your salvation; do you feel thus? In your solicitude on this important subject, you can go into your closet, and shut the door, and bend the knee before your heavenly Father, and implore his mercy. Are you accustomed to do this? Where, allow me to ask, is the secret place, to which you daily retire, and pray, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" Is there any such place under heaven? Again, in your solicitude on this mighty subject, you can go to your minister, or to some Christian friend in whom you have confi-

dence, and tell him of your anxieties, and ask his counsel and his prayers. Did you ever do this? Or will you promise me that you will do it, the first opportunity? If you are not willing to make such a promise, then it is plain that you do not feel or manifest any proper solicitude on the subject. It is plain that you do not think or care seriously about it. It is plain to me, that this cry of inability has been set up, not because you feel greatly troubled with it, but as a convenient refuge of lies, under cover of which you hope to escape from the force of religious truth, and the pressure of moral obligation. And I will further say, what is very plain to me, that unless this refuge of lies is abandoned, and you come to feel and acknowledge that the requirements of God are reasonable, and *can be and ought to be obeyed*, I see not how you are ever to be awakened, converted, or saved.

I admit that there are some things connected with your salvation which you cannot do, and which you are not required to do; but there are other things which you can do, and ought to do, and must do, if they are ever done. You cannot make an atonement for your sins; but you can embrace that atonement which Christ has made for you. You cannot cancel your debt to Divine justice; but you can accept the free forgiveness of this debt, which is proffered you on the terms of the gospel. You cannot, by any of your own performances, lay for yourselves a foundation of hope; but you can set down your sinking feet on that firm foundation which has been laid in the sufferings of Jesus. Now we do not ask you to do those things which you cannot do. God does not ask or wish you to do these. But we do ask you, and urge you, to do with all diligence *what you can do.* And we solemnly promise you, that, if you will do what you can—if you will begin now, and do what you can—*you shall be saved.* Yes, I repeat it, my unconverted hearers, begin now in earnest, and do what you can; and my soul in your soul's stead, if you are not saved.

But shall I tell you, in conclusion, all my fears? My fear is that you will not do what you can. My fear is that you will go away and soon forget all you have heard. If you have had serious impressions, I fear you will lose them. If you have formed good resolutions, I fear you will break them. If your sinful slumbers have been a little disturbed, I fear they will soon return upon you, and that nothing effectual will be done. Meanwhile, time is rolling on—the thread of life is running off—the day of probation wasting—and the day of decision coming on; and soon it will be too late to repent! Then you will awake, indeed, but it will be to unavailing sorrows. You will awake—but it will be only to mourn forever—"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved." O, be entreated now to awake in earnest to this great subject. Begin now to do *what you can.* We do not ask you to do more. Begin now to repent of sin, and turn to God, and humbly seek his grace; and God will assuredly have mercy, and your souls shall live. Amen.

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SERMON CCXXII.

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THE SINNER ARRAIGNED AND CONVICTED.

Daniel v. 27. *Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting.*

Job observes, that "the triumphing of the wicked is short." This remark was signally verified in the narrative connected with the text. Belshazzar, the monarch of Chaldea, was indulging in sinful and intemperate merriment, accompanied with profane contempt of the God of Israel. While employing the vessels, which he had plundered from Jehovah's temple, in profane appropriation to the honor of his idols and the sensuality of his guests, a mysterious hand appeared inscribing on the wall of his palace the ominous sentence which was translated by Daniel, and a part of whose import is given in our text. This portion of the inscription described his character, and another his doom: and "in that night," says the sacred historian, "was king Belshazzar slain." "Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting."

But, my hearers, there are balances in which we must all be weighed; and if, when the scales are suspended and that scrutiny takes place, *Tekel*, as in the case of the impious monarch, should be inscribed on all our pretensions and stamped on all the claims we advance, how sad, how sorrowful beyond conception must our condition be. "God," we are assured, "has appointed a day, in which he *will* judge the world in righteousness;" and as through that ordeal each one of us must pass, it is the dictate of wisdom to ascertain, if practicable, by anticipation, what our situation is likely to be, when "time" to us "shall be no longer." The great inquiry then, arising from the text, in application to ourselves, and to others for whom we feel concern, or in whom we take interest, is, on what individuals, or classes of individuals, is this sentence likely to be *pronounced*, and this censure liable to fall "in

the day of our Lord's appearing." Who will then be "found wanting?" and "who shall be able to stand?" It cannot admit of question, that radically defective in character will be found all the openly *immoral*, whether their immorality be confined to the breast of one, or extend to the violation of more, or of all the commands of the decalogue. All who live and die in the commission of gross and flagrant sin, unrepented of and unforsaken, must fall under condemnation. "Be not deceived," says one who was authorized to decide on this subject, "neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor drunkards, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor extortioners, shall have any inheritance in the kingdom of God." For "because of such things as these, cometh the wrath of God on the children of disobedience." But it can hardly be necessary to say much, to prove that in all the openly vicious there is a radical failure of the character necessary for heaven. This point very few will have the hardihood to contest.

But, as a general remark, which we shall establish and corroborate by several particular details, it must be asserted, that *all unrenewed, unregenerate persons*—who have not "put off the old man with his deeds, and put on the new, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him"—all who have not, in the language of the Bible, "passed from death unto life"—are, by him who is to decide the fates of men, pronounced unfit for the abodes of heavenly bliss.

1. Let us place in the balances the *mere moralist*, and bring *his* pretensions to the test. Some consider the whole of religion as consisting, the whole of "the duty which God requires of man" as contained in the performances and virtues, which are ordinarily comprehended under the common phrase, morality; whether the term embraces only those attributes of human character which consist in giving to every one his equitable *due*, or extends to those exercises of benevolence and charity, which form the constituents of distinguished philanthrophy; whether, simply, the righteous man "for whom," as Paul expresses it, "one will *scarcely* die," or "the good man, for whom some *would* dare to die." All pretensions beyond these are regarded by the class to whom we now allude, as hypocritical, ostentatious, unnecessary or fanatical. But let us weigh, in the balances of the sanctuary, the claims of the moralist in the narrower or broader signification of the term. To what will these claims amount? It will be seen, on examination, that these matters, which are considered as the *whole*, or at least as the *principal part* of duty, are regarded in but a *secondary* and subordinate light, by him who holds in his hands the scales of divine justice, and truly estimates the weight and worth of whatever is placed in them. "Thou shalt *love the Lord thy God* with all thine heart," *he* asserts to be "the *first and great* commandment." To that of "loving our neighbor as

ourselves," he assigns only a secondary place, calling it "the second" commandment, and observing concerning it, that it is "like unto the first." What then, if weighed in the balances, is to become of the man, who lays it down as a principle, and acts upon it as the maxim of his life, that there is no religion and no divine requirement, beyond feeling and performing justice and mercy to our fellow men? When the law of God is thrown into one scale, and such a man deposited in the other, must not *Tekel* be inscribed on all his pretensions, on all his attainments, on all his expectations?

So thought and so felt some of the most eminent, exemplary personages that have ever lived. By whom has the character of *Isaiah* ever been impeached? Yet, *he* says of *himself*, "*I* am a man of unclean lips." Who has ever discovered a flaw in the character of *Daniel*, as delineated on the sacred page? Yet, Daniel said, including himself among his people, and involving himself in one common charge with them, "O Lord, to *us* belongeth confusion of face, because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though *we* have rebelled against him." How more than ordinarily brilliant shines the character of the patriarch who dwelt in Uz. Look at the attributes and actions of Job. He "was eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, a father to the poor. He brake the jaws of the wicked and plucked the spoil out of their teeth. When the ear heard him, it blessed him, when the eye saw him, it gave witness to him." Why? "Because he delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless that had none to help him: the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon him, and he caused the widow's heart to leap for joy." *He* possessed, then, in an eminent measure, an unparalleled degree, that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father," which, according to the apostle James, consisted, as one of its primary and essential ingredients, in "visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction." Surely, such a man must possess spiritual weight. Let us then place him in the balances: but he has seated himself there of his own accord, and to what discovery is he brought? To this: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes:" which is perfectly tantamount to the confession, "I am weighed in the balances and am found wanting." And there he sat ashamed, confounded, and alarmed, till another object appeared in sight. *That* relieves and even transports him, and he exclaims, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Weigh him after this, and he is no longer "found wanting;" he is complete in Christ," and can scan and survey the holy law of God in all the strictness of its requisitions, and the severity of its sanctions. For his Redeemer is in the scales with him, that Redeemer who "magnified the law and

made it honorable;" who "redeemed him from the curse of the law, being made a curse for him." But "without Christ he could do nothing, and was nothing;" and he was constrained, in answer to the question, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" to reply, "Not one."

2. Another candidate for heaven, whose pretensions it may not be amiss to scan, is the religious *formalist.* *He* tells us, that he is punctiliously religious—his prayers and his alms—his church and his closet—the baptismal font and the sacramental table, all testify to the fairness and fullness of his claims to "sit in heavenly places." But Jehovah long ago weighed characters of this description and pronounced them wanting. Heartless forms without heartfelt experience will not answer. He had a people, who, in the days of Jeremiah, exclaimed with no small confidence, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are these." To this people, then, before and afterwards, thus "trusting in man and making flesh their arm;" thus "sacrificing to their own net and burning incense to their own drag," he had occasion to say, in the language of reproof and rebuke, by *one* prophet, "rend your heart and not your garments;" by *another*, "to what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? Bring no more vain oblations: your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me: I am weary to bear them." "Ye that compass yourselves about with sparks of your own kindling, and walk in the light of your own fires, this shall ye have at my hand; ye shall lie down in sorrow." And "God manifest in the flesh," when on earth, found the posterity of the same people bolstering their frail and fallacious hopes upon a similar plea—"We have Abraham to our father." "Whose mouth he stopped," and whose vanity he suppressed, by adding, "God is able even of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." Thus, too, boasted the Laodicean church, in reference to her fair, but superficial, exterior—"I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing." And with similar fidelity, the Searcher of hearts prostrated her pride, by the allegation, "thou art poor, and miserable, and wretched, and blind, and naked," and ignorant, for "thou knowest it not." Thus must all, who "have a form of godliness," but "deny" or dislike "the power," expect, when "weighed in the balances," to be "found wanting."

3. Let us next examine the claims of the *Antinomian.* He is that kind of religionist, who sets the gracious gospel of Christ in opposition to the moral law of God; as if the former was intended, or at least calculated, to undermine, vacate, or destroy the latter. In direct subversion of such a theory, the author of Christianity gives the caution, plain, strong and salutary, "Think not that I am come to destroy the *law or the prophets,* I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." The

tenor of the antinomian's life, if not the direct language of his lips, is, let me "continue in sin that grace may abound." There is a spirit, akin to antinomianism, seriously at work in the hearts of not a few who make no profession of religion, under the influence of which, they remain contented without any visible acknowledgment of religious truth, and mingled with the "world which lies in wickedness." They make the doctrines of the Gospel, misunderstood or perverted by themselves, their plea for refusing or declining to embrace its truth, and to swear allegiance to its author. They make no effort to obtain salvation, *because* they know not before-hand, that, in the purpose of Heaven, they have been "chosen to salvation." They conclude, that if they *are* so chosen, when the time arrives, they will be brought into the fold, and need feel no uneasiness at present, at being out of it. And that if they are *not* the objects of this previous choice, they may as well eat, drink, and be merry:" for do what they may, they must die. Such however most cautiously avoid carrying their principle out into the affairs of "the life which now is." If *sick*, and apprehending dissolution, though this principle might save them much expense from the physician's charge—much distress from the nauseous taste and painful operation of medicine—they nevertheless employ the man of medical skill, and that without knowing, or waiting to ascertain, how the decree of God has decided in the case. If one of this class is engaged in *agriculture*, he ploughs and sows, weeds, waters and manures, without inquiring whether God has decreed him a crop or not. If in *mercantile* employ, he studies the state of the market, inquires how he may most advantageously "buy and sell, and get gain;" and so of other avocations.

Now, unless the adopter of this principle in religious things, apply it also to the affairs of his vocation or profession in the world, what a singular, what a contradictory aspect will he exhibit at the judgment-seat of Christ! It will appear, that, where the subject was distasteful, his principle was tenaciously adhered to, where agreeable and palatable, it was dispensed with, and then he set himself at work to accomplish his projected object, as though omnipotence were his attribute, and the very decrees of God might be set at defiance. O, what a contradiction is sinful, erring man—what an insoluble enigma, the human heart!

But view next the antinomian *professor in* the church. Having entered Zion's sacred inclosure, *he* fancies all is well, it becomes his privilege to sin, at least by omissions of duty, if not by commission of positive trespasses. He is now "in Christ Jesus," and cannot be lost, nor incur condemnation. See this professor *in his family*. Though negligent of domestic devotions; though dispensing with family government, at least in its religious department; though practically dissenting from Joshua, who determined "as for me and my house we will serve the

Lord"—from Abraham, of whom God testified, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him"—from Hannah, who gave her Samuel to the Lord, before he was born and all his life after—from Lois the grandmother, and Eunice, the mother, who began with their Timothy when quite a child, rearing him up to bless the church of God, and to illustrate the truth, "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it"—*he* notwithstanding hopes, when "weighed in the" final "balances, he will *not* be found wanting."

View this professor again *in his intercourse with the world.* Carrying out his principle, where he can render it subservient to his secular interests, he soon renders the men of the world fearful of coming, in matters of business, into contact with him—preferring much to transact their affairs even with men of their own unpretending, irreligious stamp, than to have commercial intercourse with him. Can it be said of *such men*, that they are even "not far from the kingdom of God?" "Weighed in" Jehovah's equitable "balances," they must inevitably "be found wanting." What claimants for eternal life still remain? We may specify,

4. That large class, in the fourth place, who call themselves, the *sincere*, the candid and the charitable. Give me but the fact, says the individual ranged under this classification, that my neighbor is sincere in his belief, and I ask no more—I inquire not what that belief is—I am satisfied he is on the road to heaven. God is *pleased* with the great variety of worship that his creatures pay him, whether under the denomination of "Jehovah, Jove, or Lord." If the *pagan* mother be sincere in the sacrifice, let her give her first-born to the jaws of the fishes of prey—the fruit of her body to the waters of the Ganges. If the *Jew* be sincere, let him rave at the name of "Jesus of Nazareth," whom Christians adore, leave his Bible unexplored and sit at the feet of the Rabbi. If the *Papist* be sincere, let him close his eyes and ears to the Scriptures, and submit both his understanding and conscience to priestly domination and control, unbar the door of the Inquisition and expose heretics to its fury. If the *Protestant* be sincere, let one say, "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." Let another give glory only to the Father, dethrone the Son, and make a mere attribute of the Holy Ghost. The wings of this man's charity are sufficiently broad and strong to waft them all to heaven!

But if sincerity be all that is necessary to render a man's religion right, how ridiculous a part was acted by Saul of Tarsus, in exchanging his Judaism for Christianity. If he could honestly say, "I verily thought I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth," why did he not go on to "waste the church of Christ?"

Why should he exchange the feet of Gamaliel for the feet of Jesus?—the temple of Jerusalem for the jail of Philippi?—the countenance of the priesthood for their menaces and frowns?—the honors, emoluments, and prospects which belonged to him, as "an Hebrew of the Hebrews," for the prisons and deaths, which awaited him as a Christian?—Why sacrifice a name unblemished, and a reputation untarnished among his own people, to be regarded and treated as "the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things?"

But Paul made the discovery, and happily for him he made it so seasonably, that even sincerity *might be* the high way to perdition. When celebrating the grace, that snatched him, in the midst of his sincerity, "as a brand from the burning"—when telling the world, he sought to convert, of the true, faithful, and worthy to be received saying, that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners"—he could not rest till he added in the language of severe self-reprehension, "*of whom I am chief.*" Hear him when in bonds, in the presence and subject to the power of his enemies—hear him at Agrippa's bar, appealing to his enemies and challenging investigation into his former life—"My manner of life from my youth, which was at first among my own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion, I lived a Pharisee." If they would testify. They were silent under this appeal; they would not testify for him, and they could not testify against him. Was not such a man sincere?

But when he looks at heaven, on what does he ground his hope of entrance there? On his morality, his forms, his duties, his services, his sincerity? On not one, or all of these. In the matter of expectation and dependance, he does with this as the mariner, in danger of shipwreck deals with his most precious cargo. To preserve his vessel and save his life, such a mariner throws all else overboard. Thus, Paul, aware that nothing but the Redeemer's atoning blood was capable of securing the best man in the world from spiritual and eternal shipwreck, clings to the cross of Christ and lets all else go. "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ, yea, doubtless, I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Away then with sincerity, as in itself alone a competent ground of human hope; it must be *that* sincerity which consists in the belief of evangelical truth. "Sanctify them *through thy truth*," prays Jesus to his Father, "thy word is truth."

Do you inquire now, with the astonished disciples, "Who then can be saved?" A satisfactory answer to this inquiry is all important, and shall be next attempted. We observe then,

The *really penitent* belong to that number. Repentance is necessary for all; otherwise he who was "exalted on high as a Prince and a Saviour," in order to give it, would not have "commanded *all men* every where to repent;" nor have given to his disciples an order so universal and unqualified in its application, as that "*repentance* and remission of sins should be preached among *all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem." All men are in themselves sinners, and this is in itself the reason, why in the first instance all are "found wanting." For sin consists not only in the "transgression of the law," but in "coming short of the glory of God." "God has concluded all under sin." "Every mouth must be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." Such is universally man's character, and in reference to this character, and in recommendation of the feeling that becomes it, it is written, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit—a broken and a contrite heart he will not despise." "To this man," it is testified, "will he look even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at his word." Let the true, genuine penitent then be "weighed in the balances, and *he* will not be found wanting."

Again the sincere evangelical *believer* answers the same description; he that, besides exercising "repentance towards God, also exhibits "faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ." How ample and various are the testimonies on this point. Among them the following constitute but a few. "He that believeth shall be saved." "He that believeth on the Son of God is not condemned." "Whosoever believeth on him hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." But what is faith? That question is most important. Faith, as it relates to all other subjects, is an affair of the head alone; but as it relates to the religion of the gospel, the religion that issues in salvation, it involves the heart also. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." There is a faith resting on facts, and implying the attachment of credibility to *them*—this is called historical faith. There is a faith that receives theoretical principles of truth, and is confined to mental action in reference to them—this is speculative faith. Both are necessary, but yet not sufficient, to secure a man from the charge of "being found wanting." To them must be superadded an exercise that implies the attachment of the heart, and as its result, the right ordering of the life. The head may be filled with orthodoxy, and yet the heart be engrossed and the life overrun with heterodoxy. Every truth of the Bible may be believed, simply because the evidence is so plain upon the page of revelation, that it cannot be resisted, and "he who runs must read it." And yet these truths, plain and palpable as they are, may not be received "in the love of them," into "*good and* honest hearts." James represents the devils themselves as

the subjects of such a faith—"they believe, they tremble" too, but "Satan cannot love." Saving faith implies *trust* in the merits and *love* to the character of Christ, as well as belief of his records. It cries, "Lord save me or I perish"—it "rejoices in Christ Jesus and has no confidence in the flesh." It throws around the sinner the robe of *his* righteousness, having first torn away and displaced the "filthy rags" of *his own*. It carries the sinner into "the city of refuge," safe from "the avenger of blood." It admits the long account of charges in God's book to be correct—audits the whole and certifies its accuracy—it sees in the debit side a long and frightful list of transgressions, and calculates the amount at ten thousand talents"—it surveys the credit side, and finds there the gloomy entry, "he hath nothing to pay"—and just as the creditor is going to give orders, "cast him into prison until he has paid the very last farthing," it introduces a mysterious hand, not unlike that which terrified Belshazzar, but for a very different, for a very opposite purpose—the hand of redeeming love, writing at the foot of the account a receipt in full, in the following terms, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin." Thus it furnishes the penitent with a complete discharge. Thus "where sin abounded, grace much more abounds." Thus "grace reigns through righteousness;" thus, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." This penitent believing sinner is, weighed in the balances and is *not* found wanting," "for he is found in Christ," like Noah in the ark, whom the deluge cannot touch—like Naaman in the pool, where he loses for ever his leprosy, once regarded as incurable. It is grace then that reigns, from first to last, in the salvation of a sinner; for he is "justified by faith," and faith disclaims merit, while it produces, and where genuine, ever must produce all those "fruits of righteousness that are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God." Bring such a man before his God, and this language of Paul is appropriate to his case—"justified by faith without the deeds of the law." Bring him in presence of his fellow creatures, and James describes his character; "a man is justified by works and not by faith only." But flaming professors of the doctrine of grace, whose life is notwithstanding beclouded and darkened by unholy tempers, and stained by illicit practices, have not the root of this matter in them.

And now, dear hearers, with the law and the testimony in your hands, the law of Moses, which is a ministration of death, and the testimony of Jesus by whom came grace and truth, ascertain where your spiritual posture is; and if *Tekel* is the inscription on your character, let it be effaced at once—let it be commuted for the inscription—"accepted in the Beloved." But if "the foundation," as it respects

yourselves, already standeth sure, having this seal,—"The Lord knoweth them that are his"—then, "naming the name of Christ," ever after and ever more, "depart from all iniquity."

SERMON CCXXIII.

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THE NATURE, NECESSITY, AND EVIDENCES OF REPENTANCE.

Acts ii. 38. *Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*

This is the answer given by Peter on the day of Pentecost, to the great question asked by a multitude of sinners under conviction.

Repentance is an operation or change in the heart, of which baptism is the outward sign. Both are required in the name of Christ, or with faith in Him. Through this faith, His justifying righteousness is made available to the remission of sin. That which procures remission of sin, secures also the gift of the Spirit, to complete the work of grace in the heart. Therefore, said the apostle, "ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." That is—these supernatural effects, which you see, are the operations of the Holy Ghost in the work of regeneration. If you would participate in them, you must repent; and, as a public testimony of your reliance on Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, you must be baptized in his name.

Repentance, as a personal duty required of sinners, is very different from repentance as it is sometimes predicated of God. When God is said to repent, there is implied no alteration in His eternal counsels or decrees, knowledge or dispositions, but simply a change in the events of His providence as they affect, and are viewed by us. When applied to the sinner, however, repentance manifestly implies something more: as it is inseparable from true conversion, it implies all that takes place in the heart of the sinner in the work of regeneration. Hence its great importance as indicated in the answer of Peter to his anxious in-

quirers. Let us examine it in special regard to its *nature*, *necessity*, and *evidences*.

I. In its *nature*, repentance is an affection or operation of the soul, involving the action of all its powers in view of sin. It begins in an attentive consideration and intelligent apprehension of the nature and effects of sin, is attended with a godly sorrow for it, a hatred and abandonment of it, and a love of holiness. It results, therefore, in a change of character and a change of life. In a more minute analysis, we may remark.

1. In Gospel repentance, is involved a deep sense of the heinous nature of sin. There is a great difference between admitting the doctrines of the Gospel as a system of divine truth taught on divine authority, and cordially embracing those doctrines as the chosen rules of life. The former belongs exclusively to the understanding, and is the ordinary result of the right application of reason to the study of the Bible. The latter is taught only by the Spirit of God, and is a necessary result of genuine repentance. The impenitent man looks upon sin, if he considers it at all, simply as the violation of law, without any reference to the peculiar nature of that law, or of the Lawgiver. But when brought to view sin as it really is, rebellion against God, he is then convicted of its heinous nature.

2. Gospel repentance involves, in the sinner, a conviction of sin as pertaining, in its guilt and consequences, to himself. The scriptures say of the natural man, "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil, and that continually"—that "the heart of man is fully set in him to do evil,"—that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be,"—that "there is none that doeth good, no not one." This truth men do not commonly realize. They reluctantly surrender their claim to favor on the ground of personal merit. They commonly think they are better than the word of God admits. To the impenitent, their sins do not appear very odious. They do not feel the guilt of sin, and therefore cannot feel its misery and hateful nature. But when, in the light of divine truth, they see their true character and condition, they are ready to lay their hands upon their mouths, and their mouths in the dust, and to cry, "unclean, God be merciful to us sinners." "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" When the scriptures, which have just been quoted to prove the doctrine of human depravity, are adduced, the carnal heart opposes them, prompted by what it feels; but the penitent acknowledges their truth, prompted by what it feels. This depraved character is ascribed in the scriptures to mankind without exception. We therefore infer, that this experience enters into the experience of every converted sinner without exception.

3. Gospel repentance involves a deep self abhorrence. There is a distinctive difference between the impenitent and the broken-hearted sinner. The former, in his own estimation, is whole, and needs not a physician; the latter is empty, hungry, poor, and in need of all things. The former is proud and self complacent; the latter is humble and self-abased.

There is a great difference between abhorring sin, considered in its consequences, and abhorring sin, considered in itself. The latter only can lead to self-hatred. All men fear and hate misery, and would be happy if they could. Exhibit sin as the unfailing source of misery, and, as such, the sinner will hate it, while at the same time, there is nothing he sees in sin itself, which excites his abhorrence. This is mere selfishness. He seeks his own separate interest, supremely and entirely. God hates sin on account of its very nature. So every true penitent hates it. Therefore, he abhors himself, while he repents in dust and ashes.

Imperfect apprehension of the nature of sin lays the foundation for all the false conclusions of the sinner. He loves it and does not fear it. He has rolled it as a sweet morsel under his tongue. He will, perhaps, even boast of his contrivances to cheat, his evasions of the law, his seductions of innocence, his bravings of danger in dishonest enterprise, or his victories over conscience and conviction. But when, with an enlightened view of all his relations to the divine government, he finds himself condemned for entertaining an evil design, a single sin of the heart, he abhors himself as a sinner the moment he cordially approves the law which condemns him.

4. True repentance involves also right views of the character of God. God is exhibited, and His character illustrated in the law. He is against the sinner in all His attributes. He is every where to assert the claims of the law, and omniscient to recognise every violation of its precepts. He is a Being of infinite and immaculate purity, of strict and inflexible justice, of unyielding and rigid requisitions. "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne; a fire goeth before Him, and burneth up His enemies round about." The awakened and convicted sinner is fully sensible to the presence of this avenging God, "laying judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet." He says, "Whither shall I go from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the earth, even there shall thy hand hold me." To the wicked, God appears afar off, or altogether such an one as themselves. But to the awakened sinner, He is near, holy, severe against sin, almighty.

This furnishes ground for conviction. When the sinner looks into

himself, he sees nothing but an object of disease and loathing. When he looks at the character of God, he sees a justice that must condemn him, and a purity with which he can have no fellowship. He cannot be happy where he is. He cannot be happy in heaven. He cannot be happy in hell. He is an enemy to God. God is not reconciled to him, and there is no place in the universe to which he can flee from him. That God is benevolent brings him no relief, since He is a God of justice too, and always the executor of His holy law.

5. But gospel repentance involves also an apprehension of the true character of Christ. Out of Christ, God is a consuming fire. He is clothed in terror. In Christ, God appears, not reconciled to sin, but justifying the sinner through the merits of Jesus. Christ stands by the law, and wherever its thunders awaken the sinner's slumbers and hold his attention, the gospel speaks to save him from despair. Jesus says, "Fear not, it is I, behold my hands and my feet." The law is fulfilled. Thy debt is paid. "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The effects of sin are eminently seen in the sufferings of Christ, "who gave himself an offering for sin;" "who was made a curse for us, that He might redeem us from the curse of the law." Now, when the sinner, under conviction of his guilt, cries out, "what shall I do?" the answer is, "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

6. Genuine repentance involves in the heart of the sinner a true knowledge of himself in his relations to God, attended with a corresponding action. It must be so. Repentance is an act of the soul. True sorrow for sin will be attended with a forsaking of it, and a direction of all the energies of the soul, suited to those views, which have entered into the exercise of repentance. He has had very erroneous views of himself. He has formerly considered himself only as an inhabitant of this world; now he contemplates his existence as extending through eternity. Once, he was whole; now he feels that he is sick even unto death. Once, he was holy in his own eyes, now unholy. He sees all his important relations in the light of eternity. This will necessarily involve new views of the world, new views of heaven, of hell, of the judgment, new views of every thing. God is a new Being to him; Christ is a new Being; the Holy Ghost is a new Being; this is a new world; eternity has a new aspect. The true penitent is a new man. Old things have passed away; all things have become new. He acts now with new motives, new desires, new affections, new hopes. Sin is hated and forsaken. Holiness is the object of his love and desire. The world is a broken idol, and its fading forms have lost their power to please, or to influence his affections.

Thus comprehensive is the work of true repentance. It cannot be

defined as a mere abstraction, unconnected with a change of moral character. It cannot consist in a naked speculation in the mind. It involves a change—*such* a change—a new life, a life of holiness. Wherever it exists in the soul, there is regeneration in all its completeness.

II. We are to consider the necessity of this repentance.

1. Repentance is rendered necessary to our *happiness* by the very constitution of our nature. It is not the want of suitable objects on which to rest his desires and affections, that renders the sinner miserable. It is a state of heart that will make him so wherever he is placed, and whatever he may possess. In hell, among congenial spirits, he must be miserable. In heaven, among glorified saints, he must be miserable. On earth, and every where, with this heart of sin, he must be miserable. When brought to a true view of his situation, he adopts the language of Milton's fiend, as truly expressive of his feelings:—

> "Me miserable! which way shall I fly?
> Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell;
> And in the lowest depths, a lower deep,
> Still threatening to devour me, opens wide,
> To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven."

Never can a ray of light kindle in such a soul, nor hope impart its influence there, until he has exercised true repentance for his sins.

2. Repentance is necessary because the law of God cannot be honored without it. The unyielding terms of the law are, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." The wisdom of God has devised a plan, by which this law may be executed, and the penalty averted from the sinner. But in the execution of this benevolent purpose, the sinner must be the subject of repentance, which shall embrace a moral renovation of the heart. It is sometimes said that God is of infinite power, and can do as He pleases—can pardon sin without repentance. True, God can do as He pleases; and it has pleased Him not to pardon sin without repentance. But, although omnipotent, God cannot deny himself. He is unchangeable. Such also is the character of His law. The sinner, therefore, must change. Hence the necessity of repentance.

3. Repentance then is necessary, because God's mercy cannot be extended without it. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. He manifests all the tender concern of a parent. He is plenteous in mercy, but he can in no wise clear the guilty. He can never accept of sinners with the spirit of rebellion rankling in their hearts. Their hatred must be changed to love. To effect this, they must approve of God's character and law, and consequently must abhor themselves as the violators of that law, and as opposed to it. *Here they* are made to stand in opposition to themselves. Repent-

ance of sin prepares for the remission of it through the vicarious sufferings of Christ, on whom the penitent fixes his faith. How excellent soever may be the attribute of mercy in God, the sinner will never be the happier for it without repentance. No one can approach a God of mercy, nor realise the favor of a God of love, without first abhorring himself, and repenting in dust and ashes.

4. The necessity of this repentance is universal. All have sinned, and are guilty. Not one is exempted. Not one can say, I have made myself clean; I have no sin. No circumstances of difference in life constitute a difference here. These all vanish when we are arraigned in common as sinners. The points of distinction in this life relate to time, and end with it. Gold and silver, robes and titles, the dignities of office, the attainments of learning, the reputation of wisdom, the sealed parchment, the securities of property, every thing earthly will be buried in oblivion, or burnt up with the world. Man alone survives, naked before God: he stands in the simple character of a sinner. His morality cannot save him. He is a sinner still. Morality forms no adequate ground of acceptance with God. The only refuge is in Christ, and repentance opens the only way to the cross.

5. The necessity of this repentance is immediate. In order to salvation, "God now commands all men every where to repent." This command is imperative. Now is the accepted time. As soon as the sinner is cut off from time, he is cut off from all hope. It is, therefore, necessary he should repent immediately.

Repentance is delayed by some, through a blind presumption on the mercy of God. God has spared them so long that they think to-morrow shall be as this day, and much more abundant. Thus they reason from one set of facts only. God spared the old world long in their sins, but He also destroyed them in awful judgment. He sent preachers of righteousness to the cities of the plain, but He also rained fire and brimstone upon them. I want but one hour to prepare for death, once said a presumptuous sinner, determined to live in sin, and the next moment he was launched into eternity by the judgment of God. The church at Fern in Scotland fell in during divine service, and buried the whole congregation in one common grave! No man has the security of a moment. The necessity of repentance is, therefore, immediate.

Repentance is delayed by others because they are young. And do young sinners never die? Read the public obituaries. Go to the sculptured memorials of the dead, and there learn the danger of this delay. But who is willing to spend the best of his days in sin? God may not accept the remnant. "Oh, that I had served my God with as much fidelity as I have served my king," once said a rejected cardinal.

who had put his trust in princes, "and he would not have cast me off in my old age to the fury of my enemies."

Others again excuse themselves, because they are not as great sinners as some others. But what say the Scriptures? "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of the whole." A single sin unrepented will sink the soul to hell. Who can say he has not sinned? Say not, then, you will delay repentance. Repent immediately.

III. A consideration of some of the evidences of repentance is also necessary to a full view of the subject. These evidences may be very properly divided into two classes, internal and external; or those that enter into the essential experience of the Christian, which are, therefore, the subject of his own consciousness, and those which are obvious to others. Of the former class are all those exercises, which are essential to true repentance—a conviction of sin as heinous and personal, consequent self abhorrence, right views of the character of God as a moral governor, of Christ as a Saviour, of himself in relation to them, and to eternity—all resulting in a hatred and forsaking of sin, and a love of holiness.

These evidences, wherever they exist, will develop others to public observation. They will influence the life. They will furnish a train of evidences in the life and conversation, which will be decisive of the moral action of the heart. "He has put off the old man with his deeds, and has put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him." "He has put off all these things, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication, out of his mouth, and has put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering, forbearing and forgiving, even as Christ hath forgiven him." Moreover, "he puts on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." "The word of Christ dwells in him richly, and whatsoever he does, in word or deed, he does all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; and they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."

In the subject, has now been presented the true answer to the absorbing question, which possesses the anxious and entire attention of the convicted sinner. You see the nature of true repentance, the duty, necessity, and evidences of it. Nor is it the work of a moment. It is the work of life. The true penitent lives a life of repentance.

Consider carefully, then, a subject, which involves your eternal life. Delay not so important, so necessary a work. "Repent, and be baptized, *every one of you*, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of *sins, and ye* shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Amen.

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SERMON CCXXIV.

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THE ADMONITORY SEASON, or LESSONS FROM AUTUMN:

Isaiah lxiv. 6. *And we all do fade as a leaf.*

Every circumstance calculated to better the heart should be noticed and improved. Even those things which tend to beget sadness should not be avoided, inasmuch as they harmonize with the actual state of human existence. "Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;" yet his great aim seems to be to defeat this repulsive decree, and whatsoever savors of it, or whatsoever seems to remind him of it, is generally an unwelcome topic of conversation. But this avoidance of every thing sombre in its aspect is not a politic measure; for, when evil comes—as come it must upon all—it falls upon us with the more overwhelming shock. It seems to be with many, a main object to drive away from the mind all consideration of the certainty and circumstances of their mortality. They cannot endure a book that paints its moral by a reference to such subjects. Even the gathering gloom of autumn is to such minds often disagreeable, and would if possible be avoided. But, happily, the Creator has so arranged the vicissitudes of the seasons, as to convey through the eye a salutary lesson upon the heart. From this none can escape. It addresses its wholesome instruction to the dark and skeptical mind, and to the careless votary of the world. They, who would scorn to be moved to seriousness by the plain admonition of a gospel minister, are awe-struck and sedate, as they witness the departing glories of the year, and see a funeral-pall silently spreading itself over the face of nature. Can they fail to recur to their own dissolution? Such was the effect upon the pious and poetical mind of the prophet, when he witnessed the autumnal leaf fading and falling, to be swept away by the blasts of winter. He thought at once of the mortality of man. He saw in this leaf a striking emblem of our frailty, and he exclaimed, "We all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind have taken us away."

The subject is appropriate for two reasons. It is the season when

our thoughts should be seriously impressed by the lesson which our Creator is reading to us from his works. It seems but yesterday, that the surrounding hills and valleys were clad in verdant beauty. Every thing was fresh and full of promise. The eye, and the ear, and all the senses were cheered and regaled. But how great a change has now passed upon them! The autumnal frosts have invaded their glories, and after a transient flush—like the hectic of death—they begin to decay and depart forever. Soon the fierce blasts of winter will come and sigh through the naked branches, and whirl in eddies these fallen leaves of the forest.

My hearers, is there not an admonitory voice in all this? You must surely admit a striking analogy between this and the desolating stroke of death, which will send us all to the tomb like the leaves of the forest, and bury us in as deep an oblivion.

But there is *another* reason why this subject is appropriate. It is not the leaves ONLY that are falling in this season of general decay. There seems to be a fall also of vigorous manhood and of youthful beauty, and the grave is gathering in its harvest from among the fairest and firmest of our community.* God is thus giving us a two-fold lesson. Most impressively does he speak to us, and say, "All flesh is grass, and the glory of man is as the flower of grass."

The text presents us with the idea of a progressive decay, preparatory to the actual fall. It declares, that as the leaf withers and then dies, so man fades away and is gone. The places that knew him shall know him no more forever.

The comparison is as beautiful as it is solemn, and I shall call your attention to several particulars showing its appropriateness.

First; *As to our corporeal powers, we fade like the leaf.*

Our bodies are of such make and material, that their continuance should be more a matter of surprise than of expectation. The pliant flesh, the brittle bones, the countless channels of the blood, the delicate nerves issuing from the brain; the heart, with rapid action, making the whole physical machinery fearfully to vibrate; the lungs, in contact often with unwholesome air—all these, amid the innumerable casualties of life, make the continuance of our bodies for a term of years a sort of standing miracle.

But whilst these powers are in play, it is evident there must be some waste of the vital principle—some wear and tear of the mortal framework. And this is admitted to be the case.

In infancy and youth—which is the forming state—the body expands and acquires tone rapidly. But soon it arrives at its acme. It reaches with wonderful rapidity its full development. Then it seems, for a brief moment, to wave like the well expanded leaf in all its matured glories; and then it shows evidences of decay.

I am sure, my hearers, you must have been struck with the rapid transition from childhood to maturity, and from maturity to speedy decline. You have seen the face that yesterday wore no trace of care, coupled with a form from which a statuary might have framed his designs—where all was youth, and health and serenity—sink, as it were,

* *Several* interesting youth in the congregation had been suddenly called away by death.

of a sudden, into incipient decay, and reveal the melancholy fact, that "all flesh is as the grass that withereth."

And this has taken place where there was no violent assault, no racking pains, nor intemperate indulgences, to hasten on a premature fall. It is simply that natural decline and waste of the corporeal powers, which indicates the speedy dissolution of the body.

It would be a most impressive scene, if the passage of a whole generation to the tomb, were as simultaneous and sudden as the fall and dissolution of the vegetable world—if some invisible cause, like the unseen blight of autumn, were to come suddenly upon us, paralyzing our strength, and spreading over us all a paleness premonitory of our fall. If a whole generation were thus to have affixed upon them the signet of death, and then, as by one fearful blast, be swept into the grave, how solemn and impressive would be the scene! Who then could look forward to the autumn of their existence, and not tremble? But, my hearers, is it less solemn as a personal consideration, that we drop away singly and silently into eternity? To *me*, it is even more so; for I have been accustomed to suppose, that when men die in company, as in a general sickness, or on the field of battle, there is less intimidation and dread. Even in a calamity so awful as death, the social principle operates to disrobe it of some of its horrors.

But the body is, like a plant or leaf, never stationary. There is not a moment when either is so. They are in progress to maturity, or they are on the decline. We have scarcely time to admire their opening beauties, before they have sensibly parted with some of their freshness and bloom, and then, but a short interval occurs, and they have gone into the sere and yellow leaf. God has put the stamp of vanity on every bright and beautiful object of earth. He means to make us feel, that here we have no abiding habitation, that we are pilgrims and strangers, and must not build our hopes on so shifting a soil.

Secondly; *How soon do our intellectual powers become enfeebled.*

So intimate is the connection between the body and the mind, when the former suffers, the latter, in most instances, suffers by sympathy along with it. But the powers of the mind do not generally indicate weakness so soon as the body shows symptoms of decay. It seems to be gathering strength sometimes when the corporeal powers are declining. But, even this nobler part feels indirectly the shock which falls on the clay tenement. The bodily functions connecting it with the external world, are the instruments which it uses in enlarging its sphere of knowledge; consequently, when they are enfeebled, the mind loses those auxiliaries without which it cannot efficiently improve. It hence often sinks into supineness—evincing no longer its wonted vigor and sprightliness. It is obliged to wait until death knocks off these rusty chains, ere it can again spread its wings and soar unfettered in its flight. When the eye grows dim, the inlet to external nature is obscured. The page of knowledge cannot be traced with the same satisfaction as formerly, and the effort to acquire being greater, whilst the physical capacity is becoming less, there is a sensible diminution of mental interest and activity. When the ear is deaf, and sounds are either not perceived or have become indistinct, another source of mental improvement is gone; and the disappointed soul must content herself, in a great

measure, with her own solitary musings. These great inlets to knowledge being obstructed, it is natural to suppose the mind will be weakened, or whatever be its *real*, its *apparent* vigor is evidently not the same.

And how soon is this the case! It takes but a few revolutions of the sun to dim the eye, and dull the hearing, and line the features with the marks of a countenance as inexpressive as if it had lost its interest in the passing scenes of earth. All must come to this. Even a Newton or a Locke, whose Herculean intellects seemed stamped with eternal durability, must sink away under the gathering infirmities of age, and then, as with an autumnal blight, go down to the shades of death. This is the natural course of things. But some are visited prematurely, as it would appear, with intellectual weakness. Like the oak in its great strength and its leafy pride, riven by a stroke of lightning and soon loosing all its verdure, some giant intellects have been suddenly overcast, and a settled melancholy or raving madness has succeeded.

So common is it for age to debilitate the mind, that exceptions are noticed and spoken of as something extraordinary. Yet, be it remembered, these exceptions are very important, as they evince the fallacy of that reasoning which the materialist employs to prove that mind and matter decay together. This cannot be true; and the fact that they *seem* in many cases simultaneously to decline, is to be accounted for on the grounds mentioned—viz. that the corporeal functions are the media through which the mind acts. These being obstructed, the mind will, of course, be affected by their loss.

Thirdly; *Our social powers soon decline, they "fade as a leaf."*

In youth the imagination is lively, the passions strong, and the love of society often intense. It is the season of frank and confiding friendship. Soon, however, selfish aims begin to narrow the circle, and the competition of the world renders man suspicious of his fellow-man. The pleasures that are purely social are then very few. But as old age comes on, the circle still diminishes. Death has thinned the ranks of contemporaries, and a new generation has but few sympathies with the past. The old man begins to feel himself alone in the world. Topics of interest to him, he finds uninteresting to others, and he is soon driven back upon himself for enjoyment; whilst the busy mass are moving on, in their plans, and purposes, and pleasures.

It is astonishing how soon this solitude of old age is upon us; and if any appeal, founded on merely selfish considerations, could weigh with us to seek God in our youth, this, it appears to me, ought to have weight. What can an old man expect from this bustling age! So soon as he is unable to struggle personally in the general direction, he will inevitably be thrown aside. Men will not stop to attend to his social wants. If he has depended on the world alone, he will find himself deserted by it. But let him choose God for his portion, and he has a resting-place. His staff then cannot be broken. He is independent of the cold-hearted throng. He has resources which will make the winter of life serene and happy.

Lastly; *How soon does a man's influence decline.*

A grand object with man is to acquire influence. This is sought by all; and few are so weak, or so insignificant, as not, in some degree, to succeed. But only here and there one attains to great influence.

Nor is this accomplished but by slow gradations and severe toil. Men will not generally concede influence to a youth, however promising his talents. He must, to distinguished talents, add untiring exertion and the wisdom of years; so that influence is late in coming and must soon depart. There is but a brief period in human life when a man's influence may be considered great. For, as the hand of time begins to scatter the marks of old age upon him, others have arisen who contend for pre-eminence; and, having on their side the vigor of maturity—the muscle necessary for the strife—the old man retires before the hardy competitor, and is soon quoted only as a by-gone chronicle. You need but glance over the surface of society at any time to see the truth of these remarks.

Thus, my hearers, are our bodies in a state of decay, and hastening rapidly to dissolution. Our minds, too, are soon to be crippled by a sympathetic connection with them. Our social powers and propensities are waning; and our influence will soon be gone. Others are rising around us impatient to fill our places; whilst they, in turn, must wither and decay, like ourselves. Are you not reminded of what the Apostle James has declared, in reply to that startling question, "What is your life?" "It is," says he, "even a *vapor*, which appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away."—What an impressive analogy! Have you noticed a wreath of mist formed by some atmospheric change? It is born in a night, and lies cradled at early dawn on the surface of the lake or river. But ere you can well fix your attention upon it, it is in motion; and a second look sees it rolling off and disappearing in the sunbeam. Behold, oh man, a picture of thy vain life! It is, indeed, a melancholy picture. "We *all*," says the prophet, "do fade as a leaf." There is no exception. There are no favored few who can arrest the desolating march of time, or escape his wide-sweeping sythe.—The rich and the great—those who build marble palaces, as if the durability of the material were proof against his attacks—they and their habitations must crumble and fall. They are building for others to inhabit, planning for others to execute, and planting for others to reap and gather in. The king upon his throne is but as the autumn leaf. The crown which he wears will soon adorn another's brow—whilst *his* will be bound with the fillets of the grave. The rich have, in this respect, no advantage over the poor, nor patrician dignity over the most vulgar of earth.

One may be like a proud and stately tree, whose tall shaft seems to pierce the sky, and whose leafy honors expand and wave in the breeze; another may be like the lowly shrub that creeps, as if conscious of its inferiority, under its shade. But the overshadowing tree may fade as soon as the humble bush. It may put off its glories as suddenly, and strew the earth with its gorgeous livery; and when it falls, it *may* make more noise in proportion to its elevation, but it will lie as low as the lowest in death.

Our importance is soon gone, even if we live. How certainly is it gone, when we die! How soon do we pass away, and how soon are we forgotten! Yes, the most towering head must come down to the dust. The loftiest crest must fall. The hour is close at hand when the frosts of death will be upon us. All will wither then.

I will close, with two or three considerations of a practical nature.

1. *You see the importance of considering your latter end and preparing for it.*

The subject forces upon you the fact that you are soon to fade like the autumn leaf. Will you, my hearers, think of this? Will you give your meditations this solemn direction? Is it not as certain that you are falling off now in all your physical powers as it is that the summer glories have gone to decay? Yes, and how soon must you lie low in death! Are you prepared for this tremendous change? Have you set your house in order? Do you stand like a shock of corn fully ripe in its season, bending your lowly head and burdened with fruit, until the great Husbandman shall come to gather you to his garner? Or are you like the useless tares, or the barren fig tree, cumbering the ground, and destined, by an insulted and indignant Creator, to a fiery doom? You are ripening, depend upon it, for heaven or for hell. I again ask, have you made the requisite preparation for your fall? Should a blast from the grave pass over you to-day, and separate you like a leaf from the earth, where would you be borne? Your body, I know, would go to the grave; but where would the soul go? Can you hope, on good grounds, that it would be wafted to heaven? Dying hearers, you must think of these things.—Be not so absorbed in the world as to neglect your preparation for eternity. If you are impenitent, I charge you, by your hastening doom, to repent—if without faith in Christ, I warn you in the words of Jesus himself, "he that believeth not shall be damned." If the world is your idol, death will come to tear that idol away, and send you shivering to God's judgment bar to answer for your idolatry.

2. *The vanity of the world is strikingly seen in view of this subject.*

All on earth is tending to decay. Dissolution and ruin are written on every thing below the sun. The proudest structures of art, though laid in brass or marble, with a view to disappoint the destroyer—see how a few generations will undermine and level with the dust! What can we *moderns* do, after the colossal efforts of Egypt and of Babylon? The next wave of time will sweep away these fragile mounds which, in our pride, we are rearing; and how soon will the icy touch of death stop the blood in our veins, and launch our spirits, prepared or unprepared, into eternity! And can we be so in love with these earthly toys? Can we, as reasonable men, give ourselves up to the pursuit of these fleeting shadows? Select the fairest specimen of coveted earthly good, and I will prove to you that it is a phantom. It cannot last; nor can it meet those enlarged expectations which stir the soul up in the pursuit. Oh, it is this vanity which mocks the mind, and makes the sigh of dissatisfaction so often come from the heart, even when its desires are realized! No, my hearers, it is not in earth to supply the immortal mind with satisfying good. Let us, therefore,

Finally. *Seek an interest in those things which are satisfying and permanent.*

There *is* a substantial good. Yes, there is one portion which can never fail, one scene which will never fade. It lieth not here within this earthly horizon. You must *elevate* your view. Yonder, in that

pure world, it is, far above this murky atmosphere, shining in resplendent brightness, and inviting our pursuit by its imperishable glories. Do you complain that every thing of earth is so short lived—that it fades under the touch—that, ere you begin to enjoy it, it is gone—that summer glories are no more—that friends fall like autumn leaves around you—that you, yourself, are losing the keen relish for enjoyment which you once had—that one opening grave seems ready for all? Well, be it so. God has said, "all *is* vanity," and he will make us *feel* it too. But it is to send your thoughts out after a better portion. ABOVE, all is permanent and glorious. Nothing there fades; nothing grows old; nothing satiates; nothing disappoints. The "inheritance there is incorruptible, and undefiled, and fadeth not away."

Christian, you have no reason to complain at the transitory nature of earthly good. *This* is not your home. These dying things are not your portion. In invading them by death, God is not depriving you of your chief good. He is only preparing the way for you to take possession of it. "Set your affections on things above." "Love not the world." Love God, and "love his appearing;" and let your heart and your treasure be on high.

Worldlyminded hearer, look at your portion. Calculate its real value. Is it so great, that by a supreme pursuit of it you are warranted in placing the soul in peril of an eternal hell! I am not saying that your pursuits are unlawful; but are they absorbing? Do they exclude from the soul God and his gospel? Is the heart supremely bent upon them? What says conscience to these inquiries? What will it say, when, like a faded leaf, you lie gasping in death, and hear the rush of an eternal storm that is to send you from that death-bed to the tribunal of God? How will these things seem then? But ah! consideration may then come too late. The awful hour is then at hand; and you must die.

SERMON CCXXV.

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THE INFLUENCE OF CHRIST'S COMING UPON HUMAN DESTINY.

LUKE ii. 34. 35. *And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, "Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."*

SIMEON was a good old man, who had long been waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was upon him. And it was

revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ. He came to the temple, took Jesus in his arms, and blessed God and said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And he blessed the parents, and said unto Mary, Behold this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." In discoursing from this passage, let us view,

I. THE OBJECT SET; in other words, the *history, character, and standing* of the Redeemer disclosed. It is interesting to know these on account of the diverse treatment he receives, and the opposite destinies which are to result. The object presented is the Lord Jesus Christ; or in the language of the text, "*This child is set.*" He was once a child. "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given." He was born, and in circumstances of poverty—in a state of deep humiliation. The place was a manger; and he grew up from a child of obscurity, to be "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." He probably wrought at a humble trade, and had no connections to give him worldly influence, and made no pretensions to worldly greatness: when he entered upon his public career, it was a career of humble, strenuous, untiring benevolence. "He went about doing good." He spake, and the lame walked, the deaf heard, the blind saw, the lepers were cleansed, the dead were raised to life. For his course of goodness, he met a reward of obloquy —a death of finished torture and ignominy. He died for the world, that believing, they might not die eternally. He rose from the grave on the third day, ascended to heaven, entered for us a priest in the temple above—became seated, for the protection of his cause, for the completion of the commenced work of redemption, on the mediatorial throne. There he is now set, soliciting regard, and thence dispensing the gifts of mercy to the rebellious. Wonderful indeed is his history. His *character* is readily defined. It was shown in the acts of his life. There were seen all the attributes of man. He *was* a man, as we are, with a proper and perfect human soul and body. There were seen also the attributes of Deity. He was—he is truly God, both God and man; having two natures in mysterious connection; being human, as to the one, divine, as to the other. He is called "The mighty God,"—"God over all blessed forever." He is the Being who searcheth the hearts and tryeth the reins of the children of men. He is the "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, the first and the last." "He created all things that are in heaven and in earth, and without him was

not any thing made that is made." He will speak, and all who are in their graves shall hear his voice and come forth: and he will be enthroned in glory and encompassed with authority, as judge of quick and dead. "All judgment is committed to the Son, that all men may honor the Son even as they honor the Father." He is honored with divine honors; he is worshipped by saints on earth, and by the redeemed and the angels in heaven. Not only wonderful the history, we add, wonderful the character, immeasurably exalted the position of the once slain, but now reigning Redeemer.

II. In connection with the character and standing of the Saviour, it may be important to state the *great principles upon which he conducts the work of redeeming mercy*, that the whole ground of love and hatred, acceptance and repulsion, may be before us.

The work in question, as just intimated, is the work of saving lost men. Two things are essentially and unalterably necessary to the accomplishment of salvation. One is pardon of sin; the other is purification from sin. Without the first we are in a state of righteous and inevitable condemnation. Without the last, we are under the power of an unresisted depravity. One without the other is no salvation. We may be purified, but if not forgiven, we cannot come into the presence and favor of God. We may be pardoned, but if not purified, our pollutions will sink us in darkness and wo. Corresponding to these two obvious and unmitigable necessities in our fallen condition, are the two grand doctrines of atonement and regeneration. Christ shed his blood to make atonement; he dispenses pardon on the ground of this atonement, and on condition of repentance and faith in the sinner. Regeneration and sanctification, the other main necessity, he accomplishes by the agency of the Holy Ghost, whose assistance he procured in our behalf, and whose grace he administers and sends. Thus far, then, we have—the character of Christ, complex and mysterious, God and man—his station, on the throne, as the Governor of the world—his work of redemption, consisting in the removal of the penalty, and deliverance from the power of sin—the principle and agent of its accomplishment, the atonement the ground of pardon, and the Spirit begetting holiness, where there was nought but sin.

III. We come now to the fact indicated in the text—*that the Saviour is rejected by some and received by others, and the cause or reason of it.* The fact is notorious. We see it in the holy, prayerful, consistent lives of some who walk by faith, and live to glorify God and do good to men. They have received Christ. Ask them, and they will tell you, their hope is Christ. We see the counterpart in the worldliness and irreligion of immense multitudes of others. They have heard of Christ,

but their lives testify, that they are rejecters of his mercy. It was long ago predicted that this would be the case. "He is despised and rejected of men." "He shall be for a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence." In the language of Simeon, "he is set....for a sign which shall be spoken against." What now is the reason of a fact so strange? That he should be received and loved, coming on such an errand of love, would not be strange. He deserves the confidence and homage of the world. Why then do men reject him? The cause lies deep in that moral disease, that controlling depravity, which infects and pervades man's nature. That, which constitutes an urgent reason for the reception of Christ, operates as the efficient and deadly cause of his rejection. But where lies the specific objection or difficulty? Where the point of repulsion? In the character or the doctrine, in the nature or the principles of Christ? It is not in the character. Worldly unsanctified men care but little, whether Christ is Divine, superangelic, or merely human. When the dignity of Christ is lowered, it is done, not because that dignity in itself considered, is offensive, but for the purpose of escaping from certain disrelished moral consequences which are invariably associated with that Divine and supreme dignity; namely, the fact and necessity of atonement for sin by the death of Christ, and the necessity of inward spiritual regeneration by the Holy Ghost.

It is, emphatically, the cross that is an offence—an offence which never will cease but with sin. Atonement and regeneration are not barren dogmas, unmeaning speculations; they are heavenly truths, instinct with life, humbling and joyous in their efficacy. They are humbling; they do what God intended they should do—stain the pride of all human glory, divest the transgressor of all ground of boasting—and lead him to acknowledge, if saved, that it is wholly by grace—that he is a brand plucked from the burning.

The doctrine of the necessity of spiritual regeneration, a change of heart by the power of the Holy Ghost, implies, yea proceeds upon the broad ground that there is no moral goodness, no true love to God in the natural heart—the heart of the sinner. It is because there is none, that it must be produced—because men are dead in sins, that they must be quickened and raised to life by the power of God. But how plain to see, that we are on disputed, resisted, hated ground. Bring home this truth to the bosom of the individual sinner, and how often will he repel it with marked displeasure. Still it is the distinct testimony of God, that the carnal mind is not only without love to God, but "is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be." This testimony is rejected, on account of the pride of the human heart; and the gospel is rejected, and the Saviour thrust away, because he presses

the fact of sin, and then bases upon it the unqualified declaration, "Ye must be born again."

The doctrine of atonement proceeds upon the ground that our own best righteousnesses are but as filthy rags—that we cannot, by any obedience, morality, prayers, almsgiving, procure the forgiveness of our sins and propitiate the favor of offended Deity. On this account, especially, is the cross an offence, namely, its conclusiveness. There is no other possible mode of pardon. Every thing else, however lovely and of good report among men, goes for nothing here. You must lay your guilty soul down in the dust before God, to be sprinkled with this blood, and pardoned by this dying goodness, or it must lie for ever under the wrath and curse of the Almighty. Men generally dislike to be thus stripped of all personal merit, and to be shut up to one way, one name, method and faith. Yet the gospel does this. Christ is this only name; his blood the only ground of forgiveness. Hence he becomes an object to be spoken against.

These feelings of dislike and repugnance would keep all from the Saviour and heaven, if left to themselves. Blessed be God that any are subdued and saved. The reason is found in the electing love of God, and the administered grace of the Holy Spirit.

IV. We are now prepared for our main point—*the consequences which are to result* in eternity from Christ's coming into the world, or the influence of his coming upon human destiny. He is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel: that is, for the fall of some and the rising of others. Christ did not come for this purpose, that some might perish under a more aggravated condemnation. His coming is simply the occasion. Just as in the passage in which God gives a direction to the prophet. "Go tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes, lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed." The meaning is not, that there would be exerted upon these rejecters of the message of God a directly and positively blinding and hardening influence; but that they would be blinded, and hardened, and destroyed, in consequence of voluntarily and wickedly perverting and disobeying the truth of God. The truth resisted always has a hardening effect. It invariably accomplishes something. It becomes the occasion of a hastened and deepened perdition, where it does not sanctify and guide to life and blessedness. So Christ is set for the fall of some, for the rise of others. He is a rock of hope, on which some will build and be saved; and also a rock of offence, on which some will dash and be broken—a rock of retribution, which will fall upon others and grind them to powder.

But the particular thought I would present is, that *Jesus the Christ* will be the occasion of the fall of some, and of the redemption of others. And the question is, what will it be, on the one hand, to fall from a Saviour's proffered help into the dark world of wo, and on the other, to rise, through a Saviour's grace and efficacy, from a world of sin to the heavenly Paradise.

In the first place, we will consider the fall as resulting, notwithstanding the coming and benign efforts of Christ. Had not Christ come, all would have fallen and perished; now, only a part—but far more deeply and dreadfully than they would have done, had no Saviour been provided and proffered them. And how does this appear?

It appears from the *sayings of Jesus Christ.* "Wo unto thee, Chorazin! wo unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee." Here we have a great general principle; and it applies to us as distinguished from those who have not the knowledge of a Saviour. It declares that punishment will be proportioned to light and privilege abused; it teaches, on the authority of Christ, that if we fall, our fall will be immeasurably aggravated, beyond what it would have been, had we not received these offers of grace and heaven. Reason and common sense confirm this principle. Let the question return:—

Why will the fall of those who fall from a Saviour's interposition be more deep and dreadful? We answer—Christ presented in his benign offices, and not received but rejected, perhaps scorned, serves *to foster and strengthen the depravity of that heart* which so treats the Son of God. All heavenly truth is, as it were, embodied in the glorious person of Jesus Christ. There is something, yea much, in Christ which will stir all the elements and energies of feeling. Christ has always been an exciting subject. On such a theme, and doctrine, and glory, none but stones and blocks can be indifferent. Christ brings out the heart, and rouses to intensity its strongest emotions. Consequently, where there is dislike, there is decided dislike. "He that is not for me is against me." He that does not receive, rejects—every time Christ is presented, positively, palpably rejects him. Now this wrong moral action, persisted in, on such a question as the reception and service of a Saviour, *must have, does* have, a powerful tendency to strengthen and consum-

mate the reign of sin in the soul. Pride is cherished—dislike of holiness and opposition to the ways and kingdom of God lamentably augmented.

Again, the ruin will be dreadful, because *guilt, criminality*, is also vastly increased. "If I had not come and spoken to them they had not had sin." "This is the condemnation, that they have not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God." These passages seem to imply, that the guilt of rejecting Christ is so enormous, that it causes all other kinds of guilt, as it were, to shrink into nothing before it. "A sign that shall be spoken against." The meaning or implication of this is, that Christ is a signal unparalleled instance of a benefactor neglected and contemned. He is an unparalleled benefactor—all love, kindness, and glowing desire to bless unworthy men—stooping from heaven to the astonishment of heaven—taking the form and lowliness of a servant—submitting to every thing for the welfare of the world. But the cry has been, all the world over, "Away with him, we will not have this man to reign over us, and be our Saviour and king." And some, more daring, have said, "Crush the wretch, and obliterate his name and cause from the records of earth." And others have stupidly cared for none of these things—neither for Christ, nor for their own souls. Christ came to his own, and they received him not. He has stood, and wept, and pleaded over the world he made, and urged the gifts of his love with long and tender entreaty; and is grieved, and wounded, and crucified afresh, if there can be pain in heaven, at the cold rejection and deadly scorn of the beings he would gladly bless with his grace and crown at last with heavenly glory. The guilt of all this is measureless in amount—red in its coloring like murder itself. For he that goes on in this way, does unnecessarily, knowingly, wantonly destroy, with suicidal atrocity, the life, by perpetrating the second death upon his own soul. Perhaps you will say, these are strong expressions. They are so, but they are not extravagant. They do not transcend the truth: indeed, they do not reach the inconceivable height, and depth, and darkness of guilt, which will adhere to, and press upon, our souls, as a burning attribute of wo, if we live, if we die, at variance with Jesus Christ.

There is another thing which will aggravate the misery of those who fall from a Saviour's love to perdition's wailings: namely, *the retrospect of the past*—of an abused and lost probation—that there was a price put into their hands to get wisdom, but they had no heart to do it. Those who thus fall into hell, will have unquestionably a vivid and active memory. What and where they were, the blessings that begirt them, the Saviour that besought them, the pardon that was proffered again and again, times without number, with tears of entreaty, and the

Spirit's striving—all will be thought of, and new throes of anguish will ensue, and regrets, which will pierce and rend the soul that utters them—"Oh that we had accepted that Saviour! why did we not? What were we about? Inexpressible madness and mystery!" Think of these things now, my hearers, while you stand on praying ground. You will think of them in eternity. But do not wait till destiny puts her iron hand, insupportably heavy, as the mountain of the Almighty's displeasure, upon you.

We now pass to a more pleasing part of our subject. Almost every subject in the gospel has two sides—a side of sin and wo, and a side of recovery and joy. There will be two sides at the judgment; there will be two conditions in eternity. While some will fall, others will rise. It remains to speak of the glory and blessedness of that "rising;" or rather, of *some of the elements and characteristics of the redeemed soul's happiness.*

Let us first glance at the depth of ruin and darkness from which that rising commenced, and the means by which it was effected. That soul, now in heaven, perfectly holy, was once a totally depraved spirit on the earth. Its depravity corresponded, we will suppose, with that of a Col. Gardiner, or an Earl of Rochester; it plunged in all pollution, practised all licentiousness for a time, and uttered all blasphemies, except the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost; was miserable in its rebellion, and said, as did one of those men, "Oh that I were that dog!" This is a strong case, but some such, without doubt, are in heaven. The Saviour had purposes of mercy—designing to show the mighty power of his Spirit, and the unsearchable riches of his grace. He visited that soul with regenerating grace, and it began to be holy. It grew, and put on more and more of the brightness of the heavenly pattern. It fulfilled its course of earthly obedience and patience, then left the body and went up to its reward in heaven. How high, how blest that rising. How wide and wonderful the contrast. Look at it—a depraved being of earth, object of Jehovah's disgust, lying under condemnation and at the gate of eternal misery, lifted up to the city, and palace, and throne of God—once all polluted, now perfectly holy; once with a body of death, now in a state of glorious immortality.

This furnishes us with one of the peculiar and thrilling characteristics or properties of the happiness of the redeemed. It is not merely safety, but safety after the most threatening peril; not merely peace, but peace after the agitations and tossings of tempest and storm; not merely purity, but purity after the debasement and odiousness of pollution and guilt; not merely stability and joy, but these after vicissitudes *and trials, which* made the heart to bleed with keenest anguish.

The same exercise, which will augment the misery of the lost, will exalt and swell the happiness of the saved. I mean recollection of the past. The redeemed will look back with admiring and adoring gratitude and praise. For they will see the way in which God did lead them, and what wisdom and goodness were in all his measures; how he blessed, even when he smote the deepest into the heart; how he made tears to sparkle with joy, and groans and cryings to rise into shouts and praises. President Edwards wrote a book which he styled "The History of Redemption," and it is full of warm interest and luminous instruction. But he knows more of that subject now; for heaven is a better place than earth to study the history of redemption. It will be undoubtedly the theme and study of eternity; and all the redeemed will rejoice in the theme and study; and they will look back upon its progress, and dive down into its mysteries, and soar up to its heights, and exult unspeakably—and then, when they look upon the author and finisher of the work, upon him who took them from perdition and lifted them to glory, they will rejoice, still again, and still more intensely for ever.

This furnishes us with another of the peculiar elements of the blessedness of the redeemed—*love to Christ.* Even here on earth the flame sometimes glows with sweet and ravishing intensity. It did in the bosom of Paul, and hence we hear him speaking of "the breadth, and length, and depth, and height," of the love surpassing knowledge. Whitfield burned with it, and exclaimed, "I want more tongues, more bodies, more souls for the Lord Jesus Christ." The martyrs burned with it, as the flames were kindling about them, and cried with their last breath, "None but Christ! none but Christ!" Rutherford of Scotland, who suffered for the sake of Jesus, seems to have been almost continually overwhelmed and consumed with this love; and in his letters he tasks all the extravagancies and hyperboles of language, to express his experience of its intensity and power: he says, "The very dust that falleth from Christ's feet, his old ragged clothes, his knotty and black cross, are sweeter to me than king's golden crowns and their worm-eaten pleasures;" and he was happy in bonds and afflictions, because he had in such energetic experience the love of Jesus. If such on earth, what will it be in heaven, before the throne? What ardor of love! What extatic joy! That the redeemed in heaven will surpass in happiness, those who never sinned, perhaps we are not altogether warranted in saying. Still there is something that seems to encourage such an idea. All the common sources of bliss, we may suppose, will be open to them; and then, there will be this in addition, the retrospect of danger and recovery—the theme of redemption. They will sing a new song, and no angel can learn it, or feel its power of ecstacy, because no angel has

been rescued from sin. It is the song of redeeming love, and they will sing it endlessly, with interest ever new, growing, untiring, and joyful.

Thus we see how high they will rise, rapt even to the third heaven, and what glories unutterable, eternal, they will have who receive and obey the Redeemer revealed; and on the other hand, how low they will sink who despise this grace—even to the pit of interminable wo—the dwelling place horrid, the prison strong, of the devil and his angels.

I close with a single remark—namely, *The coming of Christ into the world has imposed upon all very solemn and weighty responsibilities.* No one can escape from these responsibilities. Christ will have a mighty influence on your destiny, and you can do nothing to hinder it; nor can you do any thing against Christ. Whatever you may attempt in hostility to him, you will only injure and wound yourself. "It is hard to kick against the pricks." If you dash your foot upon a rock, you hurt not the rock—you hurt only yourself. If you act wrong, you are ruined; if right, you are saved. And is it not of great consequence to be saved from such a doom, and wo and flame as will overtake the neglecter of Jesus? Then act right. Do to-day what a retrospect from eternity will approve. As a first thing, an imperative indispensable duty, believe on Christ; with a penitent confiding heart receive the atonement he has made, follow the example he has set, and obey the laws he has given, and holiness will be your characteristic, and life eternal your portion. Jesus is reasonable in his requisitions. For all that he has done, he asks in return only the love of your heart, and the service of your life. Bought as you are with blood, give him without delay your love and your service. As he came to save your soul from death, give him your soul for salvation. Leave it, I beseech you, no longer in peril. It is too precious to keep in prolonged exposure to irretrievable perdition. You take care of other things; Oh take care of this—the precious, deathless soul—destined to sing in heaven or wail in hell. My hearers, remember you live in Christ's world, surrounded by light and love. You are raised high on the very pinnacle of the temple of God's mercy. See to it, that from this eminence you do not plunge down to death. Look upward, and behold the hand reached down from heaven to take you. It is Jesus' hand; for I see there the prints of the nails. He offers to take you. Will you refuse? On that height, at once of mercy and danger, held by life's brittle thread, poising and balancing over the gulf, with the waves of fire rolling and dashing beneath, and Jesus beseeching above, can you refuse? Oh, seize that hand divine, and it shall raise you to *life,* and purity, and endless glory.

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SERMON CCXXVI.

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THE HARVEST PAST.

Jeremiah viii. 20. *The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.*

In the verses preceding the text, the prophet predicts an approaching invasion of the Chaldeans, upon the land of Judah. In strong and expressive language, he describes the desolations, that would attend their march. The grapes should perish from the vine, and the figs from the fig tree; and even the leaf should fade. Their land being thus laid waste, the inhabitants of Judah would consult together to flee to the defenced cities, and hide themselves there in silent fear; "for the Lord their God had put them to silence, and, because of their sins, given them water of gall for their drink."

Meanwhile the hosts of the enemy came on with rapid step. Their troops, were so numerous that the snorting of the war horses echoed through the whole land. Their fierceness and cruelty equalled their numbers. They are compared to deadly and venomous serpents and cockatrices, who would not be tamed by any charm, but would fasten their poisonous fangs upon all alike. This denoted the blood-thirsty spirit of the Chaldeans, who would spare neither age nor sex, but imbrue their hands in the blood of all, old and young, the infant of a few days, and the hoary headed veteran of three-score winters.

In this state of desolation the children of Judah would be overwhelmed with terror. When they sought comfort against sorrow, their hearts would faint within them, their cry would be great, their minds would be turned to their God and King, whom they had justly provoked to bring upon them this fearful desolation. But their sins had hid his face, and from him no deliverance came. The season in which they might have looked for aid from their allies, the Egyptians had also passed: the summer months were gone, and the autumnal season was rapidly wasting, the winter was fast approaching, in which no army could be expected to come to their relief. Every hope of safety or deliver-

ance was cut off: all was dark and cheerless, and they exclaimed in the pathetic lamentation of the text, "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." The season in which we might have looked for deliverance has forever fled, and we are still without means of escape. What shall we do? where turn our eyes? whither direct our steps? shall light yet break upon us, and hope once more cheer the soul: or shall we perish here by the sword of the enemy, or pine away under the wasting of famine and disease? We may imagine the feelings and perplexities of a people thus situated: we may form some idea of their distress and anxiety, as the season of hope passed away and no deliverance came, till the heart, already too often made sick by hope deferred, was shrouded in despair, and they settled down upon the fatal conviction that all expectation of safety was forever cut off. But what are such sufferings and anxieties, agonizing as they are, when compared with those of the sinner, who procrastinates the work of salvation so long, as to suffer the favorable opportunity of securing it to slip away, and awakes at last to the bitter consciousness, that the harvest is past, the summer ended, but his soul is not saved? It is, that I may, so far as lies in my power, warn all of you against this dreadful end, that I have chosen these words as the theme of our meditation on the present occasion. In the remarks to be offered upon them, I propose to consider,

I. Some seasons, that ought to be regarded, as special seasons, and opportunities, of seeking salvation.

II. The danger of suffering such seasons to pass unimproved.

Let us then notice some of the seasons that ought to be regarded as peculiarly favorable to seeking, and securing salvation.

The period of our natural life is the great season of probation; God has been pleased at various eras of his government to grant unto man an allotted number of years upon earth, in which to gather up provision for immortality.

The years of the antediluvians were many, their life was protracted through many centuries, and they were permitted to see their posterity to many generations; but when they waxed mighty in sin, and instead of improving their long life as a means of growth in holiness, made it an occasion of more exceeding iniquity Jehovah, declared that "his Spirit should not always strive with man," and he reduced the number of his days to one hundred and twenty years. Afterward, in the time of Moses, he again limited man's sojourn on earth to threescore years and ten; this brief period now comprises the entire season of probation. There is no work, nor device, in the grave: but, after death cometh the judgment. Life viewed in this light, is clothed with a value and importance, which cannot attach to it under any other aspect. For, when considered with reference to its duration, it is a shadow that vanisheth away—the flower of the field that withereth in an hour,—the vapor that is dried up by the earliest sunbeam—it is even as an hand-breadth. When considered with reference to its pursuits, its joys or its sorrows, they are mean, worthless, transitory—light as bubbles that float in the summer air. But when regarded as a season of preparation for eternity, life, though brief its duration and transitory *its pursuits, has a value no* human mind can estimate:

"It is the hour that God has given,
To 'scape from hell and fly to heaven."

The Bible every where presents it to our consideration in this solemn light. And we ourselves in seasons of anxiety or suffering, are led to adopt similar views. Thus sickness or the approach of death causes many a careless sinner to look upon life, not as a season of mere earthly business or pleasure, but as a period, big with eternal interests. The hour of death is indeed to every individual, what the great day of account is to the world, a season of harvest, when all the seeds sown in the present life will yield their natural fruit. "They that have sown to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption: and they that have sown to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting." How many, in that hour of deep and solemn interest, who have sported away their precious life in pleasure's giddy round, and have toiled amid scenes of ambition or interest, to the neglect of the one thing needful, are left to cry, in bitter but unavailing repentance, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, but we are not saved!"

There are however some periods of life, which afford more favorable opportunities than others for seeking the salvation of the soul, these claim especial notice. Thus the days of childhood and youth offer more promising seasons than any subsequent stage of life. The habits of sin are then less firmly fixed: the character is yet in the process of formation, the mind and heart are more susceptible and open to impression, the entangling influence of worldly companions is weaker: and the cares and avocations of life are less annoying and multifarious, than in middle life or old age. Moreover religious truth then comes fresh to the mind. It is new, and its motives have not been presented and resisted, till they have lost all power to interest or move. The child will weep when told of a Savior's sufferings; his tender sympathies will all be awake when you speak to him of the manger, the crown of thorns, the purple robe, and the cross. His eye will fasten with unwearied attention, on his mother's face, and his ear drink in every word, as she tells of the pearly gates, the golden streets, the chrystal fountains, the shining robes, and glorious songs of heaven. The affecting story of Joseph or Samuel, beloved of God, from early childhood, will touch his heart and excite his emulation. But how soon does he lose this interest, and become hardened against these impressions! What mother has not had occasion to mourn, that, as her children advanced in years, the difficulty of gaining their attention to religious conversation has increased, and their aversion to religious truth has increased also. Youth is indeed a most favorable season to seek after God. Even with the aid of natural observation alone, we may see it is a favored hour, a day of grace, which once neglected, never returns. And the Bible by its invitations and promises, abundantly confirms this truth, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth," says the royal preacher, "while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say I have no pleasure in them." "They that seek me early," is the promise of God, "shall find me." "Suffer little children to come unto me," says the blessed Savior, "for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Another season, *deserving* special notice, is the time of health and reason

This demands careful attention, because many would put off the whole work of salvation to a sick bed or dying hour. A moment's reflection will teach all such the absurdity and folly of such procrastination. Is there, in the whole compass of subjects which invite man's notice in the present life, one which demands so early and careful attention as religion? Is there one which calls for the exercise of mental vigor and strength in so great a degree as this? We act more wisely in reference to temporal affairs. No man thinks of postponing his most difficult and important business to the hour of sickness. On the contrary he improves the day of health in arranging his affairs and securing his interests; but, when he is urged to provide for the welfare of his soul, his wisdom often deserts him, and he would put off attention to this momentous subject till the hour of sickness and death. How well might God reply, as in the days of Malichi, "If ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and the sick, is it not evil?" What? should the day of health and mental vigor be wasted in sin, and the hours of weakness and pain alone be consecrated to God? No! it is a delusion. The true harvest time, the proper season for laying up provision for immortality is while we are in the enjoyment of health and reason. The ant improves the warm days and clear, pleasant sunshine of summer, to gather her winter stores. And many a sluggard in spiritual things might go to her and be taught a lesson of wisdom. Sickness is to man, as the dread winter to her, the hour when he needs to satisfy his soul on the provision laid by in summer in the days of health, when all is bright and cheerful, and his mind is able to grasp the weighty realities of eternity. It is an hour of weakness and pain, when the mind itself is half distracted by the decay of its tenement, and a thousand dark forebodings of evil that depress the spirits, unhinge the judgment and almost unfit the man for calm and sober reflection. How melancholy the situation of those who come to such an hour and are called to bear, besides all other mental and bodily suffering, the agonizing thought that the summer is ended, and they yet have made no provision for the winter that has already overtaken them!

A third season, claiming notice as a day of grace, is the Sabbath. God has hallowed this day for himself. He has clothed it with deep and awful interest, as a season of rest from worldly care and of special consecration to his service. He has made it the day of prayer. He has taught his children to open wide the gates of his sanctuary, and sound forth the note of invitation to all who will come up to the courts of the Lord. He has placed his heralds upon the walls of Zion, and commanded them to proclaim in the ears of every passer-by, the great messages of his word. In short, he has made the Sabbath for man; and, like all other gifts of our heavenly Father's hand, it is appointed for man's good. It is designed as a barrier to the flood of sin and temptation, that rolls around us during all the week. It is to stand as a friendly and whispering monitor at the door of every man's conscience, reminding him at the dawn of each week of eternal realities. It is therefore a peculiarly favorable *season* for seeking God. It breaks off, in a measure, the current of worldly *business: it admonishes of eternity*: it leads the feet to the house of God: it

brings to the ear the motives to repentance and the message of salvation: it places the man within the hallowed influence of consecrated time and under the droppings of the sanctuary. How many circumstances favorable to salvation, thus cluster round this hallowed day! How appropriately may we apply to it the language of the apostle; "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation: To day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

There are moreover some seasons in the life of almost every individual, when the kingdom of God, in an especial manner, has come nigh unto him. These cannot all be minutely described, or accurately specified. There are hours of reflection which sometimes arrest the most careless and light hearted in the midst of their thoughtlessness and mirth. The smile passes from the cheek, and is replaced by the sober expression of deep thought. The gush of merriment from the heart is checked, and the flow of solemn reflection succeeds. The tone of laughter dies away on the tongue, and the language of anxious inquiry bursts from the trembling lip. It is an hour of meditation—it may be—of solitary meditation. The individual is alone with his God. The witching influence of gay companions is unfelt: the charming notes of the world are unheard: and the heart awakes to better feelings, to more serious thought. The Bible may lie within his reach. Almost unconsciously he lays his hand upon it. He opens the sacred page. He reads with unwonted interest and attention. The wandering thoughts that usually haunt him when perusing divine truth, do not disturb him now; but he reads with deep and all-absorbing interest. The word touches his conscience. It may be he has opened to the page, wheron are inscribed "the terrors of the Lord;" and he trembles under the sound: or his eye may have rested on the sweet invitations of the gospel, and he half inclines to accept without farther delay: or the touching story of a Savior's love and death may have arrested his attention, and almost melted his yielding heart, and bowed his half subdued will. O! what an hour! How alive with all that is most dear to man! The Spirit's still small voice is wispering to that sinner's heart. It is the harvest time—the summer season with his soul. He has begun to think; he sees his danger: he feels the need of a Savior: he is almost persuaded to be a Christian. But alas! the world rushes in: his hour of retirement has past: his season of reflection ended: his Bible is closed and laid aside, and he may weep, when it is too late, that he neglected this favored hour for embracing the offers of the gospel, and securing the salvation of his soul.

Besides these seasons in the history of individuals, there are also circumstances, connected with the progress of religion in the world, which render some periods more than usually favorable for seeking God. Jehovah is pleased, at sundry times and in divers places, to bestow an unwonted efficacy upon the means of grace. He sheds down the influences of his Spirit, that fall upon the hearts of his people, as dew and showers upon the face of the earth.—As, after a long drought, all the plants of the field are parched and ready to perish, but revive and bloom in renewed verdure and beauty, under the cooling influence of summer showers; so the church, become cold and barren from the long absence of the dews of the Spirit, revives under the opening windows *of mercy, and shines* forth in more than pristine beauty and grace. The

altars of prayer smoke with the offerings of willing hearts, the clouds of incense roll up to the skies, the tithes are poured into the storehouse, and God opens the windows of heaven and pours down a rich blessing. The shower descends not only on "the sunny hill of Zion," but it waters also all the plain around. Sinners feel its influence. The house of prayer is more frequented. The means of grace are more diligently sought after and prized. The preaching of the word, clothed with "the demonstration of the Spirit and of power," touches the conscience and affects the heart. God himself speaks in his sanctuary. He speaks from the lips of his ministering servants. He encourages their hearts: he strengthens their hands: and makes them rejoice, as them that labor not in vain, nor spend their strength for naught. By and by the enquiry is heard, What must I do to be saved? It breaks from many lips. Their anxiety has become too overwhelming to allow sinners to sit longer in silence. They must arise and seek the way to Zion. With trembling hearts they set their faces thitherward, with faltering step they press onward, faint, and almost ready to give up the pursuit; till by and by they catch a glimpse of the cross; the eye of faith fastens on a bleeding, dying Savior, and the burden rolls off. Joy takes the place of mourning. The garments of praise are put on for the spirit of heaviness: their tears are dried, and with cheerful rejoicing hearts they unite themselves with the people of God.

Such seasons God has been pleased often to grant to his people. They are as the summer time and the harvest months to the church. But they are also periods of awful responsibility to the sinner, who passes through them unconverted. He has rejected more than ordinary means of grace, has resisted the strivings of the Spirit, and hardened his heart, and closed his ear against the still, small voice of God. He has seen others yielding to the commands and invitations of the gospel. The circle of his friends and companions has been broken up: for some, once eager as himself in the pursuits of earth, have forsaken all their old objects of attachment, and chosen Christ. His own heart may have been affected, when he saw them pressing into the kingdom of God; but he has not followed their example. Meanwhile the summer is flying: the harvest is coming rapidly on; the cloud of mercy may soon roll away, the voice of the Spirit be hushed, and the heavenly dove wing its flight; yet he is unconcerned. O! if the whole season of refreshing should pass unimproved, and he be called from earth, ere another such opportunity should visit his soul, how bitter must be his reflections, as, in reverting from a dying bed to the scenes of mercy through which he has lived, he shall mourn, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, but I am not saved."

II. I proceed to notice, secondly, the danger of suffering such special seasons of grace to pass unimproved. My limits will not allow me to dwell upon the topic, nor indeed is it necessary. For a moment's reflection must teach every thinking mind the jeopardy of neglecting such favored hours. It was a neglect of this kind that exoluded the foolish virgins from the bridegroom's supper. They neglected to procure the oil for their lamps, till so late an hour, *that* the doors were forever shut before they were ready to enter. This also *robbed Esau of his birthright* and blessing. He sought a place for repentance,

but it was too late, and therefore found it not. So it is with sinners under the moral government of God. There are hours of mercy, when they may grasp the promise and make eternal life their own. If these are neglected they must bear the painful consequences. If they waste the fleeting sands of life in frivolous amusements, or unprofitable cares, they will reap accordingly. If the season of youth be devoted to mirth, they cannot complain that old age finds them without stay or staff. If health and reason be frittered away upon trifles, they cannot wonder that the sick-bed and dying pillow should be planted with thorns. If the holy light of the Sabbath beam upon them in vain; if their hours of deep and solemn meditation leave no lasting impression: if the descending influences of God's own Spirit move not to active effort, where is the power that will break their slumber? where the voice that can speak in tones loud enough to awaken them God's from their lethargy? where the influence sweet enough to lure them on to heaven? They surely cannot hope for a more favorable season, when the world shall unbind its chain and leave them unmolested to seek after God. Besides no future hour can find them as they are at present. Every day they continue in sin, they are sinking deeper in the snare, and the chains of ungodly habits are riveting upon them. The seasons of mercy, through which they have passed have left some impression. They have been as the rolling tide. If its flow has not set them towards the heavenly shore, its ebb has swept them out farther upon the fathomless deep. The heart of man must receive some impress from all the scenes of human life. God has so constituted it for wise purposes. It must either be hardened or melted under the beams of grace. The wax melts, but the clay hardens under the sun's ray; the reed bends, but the oak grows more inflexible, before the autumnal blast. So when the sun of righteousness beams, the heart that does not melt, hardens; and when the breath of the spirit passes over, the will that does not bow, becomes more obdurate. Here, in a word, lies the danger of neglecting such seasons of spiritual improvement. If neglected, they not only increase the sinner's responsibility and guilt, but they also harden him against the influence of future seasons, and thus leave him in a more hopeless and desperate situation than they found him, and thereby the last state of the man becomes worse than the first.

In leading your minds to the practical remarks, suggested by this subject, I notice, 1. Its application to the young. You, my young friends, are highly favored of God. You have all the means of salvation in your hands, and you are now at that point in your probation, when religion invites your acceptance on the most favorable terms. Cares will multiply, and temptations will increase as you travel onward. O! improve then the present moment, to secure the salvation of the soul. Youth is the time when we lay up knowledge for after life. If a man waste his youth in idleness, it will cost him a mighty effort to repair his loss in after life. Let your youth then be devoted to the persuit of the best of all knowledge—the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, which is life eternal. Suffer this season to pass, and you may sigh in vain, amid the cares of middle life and the weakness of old age, for the leisure of

youth, in which to secure the soul's salvation. Be assured the direction of wisdom, as well as the Bible, is, "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."

2. I notice in the next place, the application of this subject to those impenitent sinners, who have passed through revivals of religion unconverted. Yours is indeed a most perilous situation. How many warnings of the Bible, how many admonitions of conscience, how many strivings of the spirit have you resisted! Ah! fellow sinner, would you but pause and reflect on the season of harvest through which you have passed, without gathering any fruit into your garner: well might you tremble lest your soul be left portionless in eternity. And has the summer ended, while you are not saved? Can you then be unconcerned? Awake, awake, without delay, lest the winter of death set in upon you unawares, and your hopes be forever quenched in despair. True, you have resisted the mighty operations of God's grace, but still you are spared —still there is space for repentance. O! lift up the heart then in prayer for pardon—and like the man who has neglected the most favorable juncture of affairs, use double diligence lest you finally fail of the kingdom of God.

3. The subject speaks a note of warning to every impenitent sinner. These seasons of grace, these hours of mercy are all passing away. The summer is well nigh spent, the harvest is rolling on; he that would reap its fruit, must speedily thrust in his sickle. Life's sands are fast running out; youth, manhood, and age are fleeing like shadows across the plain; the tabernacle is fast crumbling and ready to perish: the Sabbath, with its hallowed privileges, the means of grace, and the refreshings of the Spirit will soon reach us no more. Soon we shall be forever beyond their sound and influence. And are you still in impenitence? Still secure in sin? What madness. Surely your soul is in jeopardy every hour while you delay: for there is but a step between thee and death. O! impenitent sinner what art thou doing? Lay aside thy earthly gold: dash down that cup of pleasure: trample that laurel under thy foot: and lay up treasure in heaven, and drink of the water of life, and put on an incorruptible crown. Delay not thy choice, for there's but a moment in which to make thy decision. All these earthly baubles will not quiet the pangs of thy death bed, or alter the terms of the judgment, if on looking back on a mispent life, conscience shall thunder in thy ear—The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and thou art not saved. Not saved! what then hast thou? Not saved! then art thou lost: and "what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul."

SERMON CCXXVII.

By Rev. DAVID MAGIE,
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CARELESSNESS ABOUT RELIGION UNREASONABLE.

Acts xviii. 17. *And Gallio cared for none of these things.*

Man differs from the beasts that perish, by possessing a capacity for thought and reflection. He alone of all the creatures on earth, is able to contemplate his own destiny, to weigh the consequences of present conduct, and thus to choose the good and refuse the evil. The entire world in which he lives, cannot set limits to his investigations. If so disposed, he can push his researches into Eternity itself, and dwell upon scenes which are to transpire long after his own body shall have been laid away in the dust.

But man is distinct from angels above him, as well as from animals below him, for he has the concerns of two worlds to attend to. His nature is compounded, made up of body and soul, and consequently there are two classes of objects which claim his regard—two interests neither of which he is at liberty to neglect. Besides making provison for a residence on earth, he has upon his hands the more important work of laying up a treasure in heaven. In order to fulfil the high purposes of his existence, he must not only be diligent in this world's business, but fervent in spirit serving the Lord.

By most men, however, one of these interests, and the one too of confessedly greatest moment, is lamentably overlooked. They are careful to prove their newly bought oxen, to examine their recently purchased farms, and to drive forward the affairs of their merchandise, but this is all, or nearly all they think of. Instead of making the salvation of the soul a matter of deep and daily concern, their chief inquiry is, what shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed! That part of their nature which likens them to brutes is provided for, but that which likens them to angels and to God, is forgotten.

Such a man, at least so far as religion is concerned, was Gallio, the proconsul of Achaia. He acted very discreetly, and as an honest, upright judge, in deciding that the difference between Paul and his accusers, was not of a character to require the interposition of any civil court. But we cannot commend his prudence or discretion in "*caring* for none of these things." As a magistrate he did right in driving the vindictive Jews from his tribunal, but as a man he was deeply in fault for turning from such a subject with a cold and philosophical indifference.

But the thing which has been, is now. In a majority of cases it would seem that the men of our day, do not give to religion enough of care and thought, fairly to ascertain whether it has any special claims to their serious and immediate regard. Speculatively, perhaps, they admit that there is a hell; but they take no pains to avoid that place of torment. They grant that there is a heaven; after all they will not be persuaded to make one persevering effort to gain its bright and unfading crown. Religion floats loosely on the mere surface of the mind, without ever descending to touch the heart, or influence the conduct.

Now, is this carelessness to the interests of the soul, and of the world to come, reasonable? My object is to show that it is not.

1. Religion involves considerations deeply interesting, in themselves considered.

We can scarcely open the Bible without finding disclosures, in regard to time and eternity—this world and the next, of a character that may well challenge the fixed and earnest attention of every man on earth. The communications of this Holy Book, are grand and mighty beyond all conception. On one page it places before us the infinite, self-existent, eternal, almighty, omniscient, and omnipresent Jehovah, in whom we live, move, and have our being. On another, it informs us of the awful fact of our own apostacy, and of the guilt and wretchedness to which the entire race is exposed, both here and hereafter. On another still, it brings into view the glorious doctrine of a Mediator, and we see Jesus travelling in the greatness of his strength, to accomplish the amazing work of man's redemption. While on a fourth page, the scenes of the resurrection, the final judgement, the separation of the righteous and the wicked, and heaven and hell, are spread out in living colors before us.

Can any thing within the whole compass of human thought, be more grand and solemn? Are these subjects about which it is wise to trifle? Men will traverse half the globe to reach the top of some lofty mountain, or to stand a single hour upon the brink of some foaming cataract. Treasure and toil, and even life itself, are deemed to be well expended in tracing the course and fixing upon the head of one remote and wandering river. Things of this kind are wont to raise strong emotions. But tell me, is there nothing great, nothing sublime, nothing worth research in the idea of a God, a Deity incarnate, a throne of judgment, a crown of glory and a world of wo? The book of God outdoes in all these respects the works of God. On these sacred leaves are things calculated to raise sublimer sensations in the mind,t han either the Alps or the Andes, or any of the far famed seven wonders of the world. Why then are the hearts of men dead to the grandeur of religion, while they are so alive to every other grandeur?

Besides, the matters with which religion has to do, are all practical in their bearing. The Bible does not exhibit to us the attributes of God merely to excite our wonder, but to lead us to love and obey him. It does not place before us a Savior bowing himself under the weight of a world's redemption, merely to move our sympathies, but to produce a permanent influence upon our hearts. It does not reveal to us a future state, merely that we may speculate about its bliss or wo, but that we may secure the one and avoid the other. The God the Bible makes known, is the God whom we are to choose as a Father and Friend. The Savior it reveals, is the Savior to whose bosom we must flee with the cares and sorrows of our aching hearts. The heaven it unfolds, is the heaven where we are to strive to live forever. The hell it tells us of, is the hell from which we are to labor and pray to be preserved. Every thing here comes home at once to the heart, as truth to be believed, as rules to be followed, as principles by which to be actuated, and as supports on which to lean.

No wonder then that religion works such a change in the character of all who are brought savingly under its influence. It lifts the poor out of the dunghill and sets him far above the princes and nobles of the earth. The Dairyman's Daughter, or even the Praying Negro had loftier conceptions than the hero of the Nile, or the man whose eloquence so long swayed and enchained a British senate. And yet there are those who "care for none of these things." They can read, and think, and feel on other subjects. Heroes, statesmen, and philosophers all engage their attention, and they can admire the exploits recorded on the historic page. But there is nothing in the gospel of the blessed God, or the story of the wide spread influence of redeeming love upon which they can dwell with the least delight. Oh, is there taste, is there sentiment in such a state of mind as this?

2. The interests at stake here are all personal, and they are immense in*terests.*

Religion, says the renowned Locke, if any thing, is every thing, and the

bare possibility of its proving true, should secure for it the earnest and solemn attention of every reflecting mind. This is the remark of one of the wisest men that ever lived, and no one can find it in his heart to dissent from its correctness. What then should be our feelings on this subject, when probability is reduced to certainty, and reasoning results in complete and triumphant demonstration? To be careless under such circumstances is folly indeed.

The object to be gained is the salvation of the soul. Grant then that the Bible is true, and it follows without dispute, that every man on earth is to enjoy the everlasting favor, or to suffer the everlasting frown of Him that made him. Each one of us is to reign in heaven or to burn in hell forever. What can counterbalance such an object. Put the material universe into the scale, and it has not the weight of a feather against a mountain. All computation fails. Arithmetic has no power to tell what would be the disaster of the man who should gain the whole world amd lose his own soul, or the profit of the man, who should lose the world and save his soul.

Can you measure the blessedness which will be enjoyed by a single redeemed sinner, during the long lapse of eternity? The work is beyond an angel's reach. Well does the Apostle call the happiness of that bright and unchanging world, a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

On the contrary, who can describe the misery of an eternal residence in the land of despair? There too all effort fails. No one can tell what will be the pain and agony of dwelling forever with devouring fire, of lying down in everlasting burnings! Never on this side of the grave shall we be able to measure that wretchedness which must be borne by the sinner, as he makes his long and gloomy journey in the world of wo.

Far smaller matters than these excite attention. What lines of care and anxiety are often drawn upon the brow of one, who is struggling after a little political distinction? How does the lover of this world's wealth toil and watch, by day and by night, to gather a heap of shining dust! Think of the tumult and agitation of the man, whose commercial credit is deeply pledged, and who sees no way open for the redemption of that pledge! Here we justify solicitude. But are men to feel no anxiety when the soul is in jeopardy? Is care out of place only when it concerns judgment and eternity? Answer these questions ye who deem it wise to forget God, and lose sight of your own final destiny.

3. We learn from the very nature of man, that religion is the concern to which he ought chiefly to attend.

Man, it has been well said, was made for religion; and religion, it may be added, was made for man. Why else has he an undying soul, as well as a dying body? Why else is not the grave the end of him? Why else does he feel such irrepressible longing after immortality? Why else is the whole world in which he lives unable to carry one cup of real consolation to his mouth? Fallen and ruined as he is, there is a divinity within, which not only "intimates Eternity to man," but urges him to prepare for that eternity.

The voice of nature, as well as the voice of revelation, decides that "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and enjoy him for ever." This was the design of his Maker in giving him existence, and this should be his own design in reference to that existence. Never should he be willing to live, under any circumstances, or during a single day, for any lower or meaner object than this. To call him a good farmer, an ingenious mechanic, or a prosperous merchant is nothing, unless you can also call him a sincere Christian. To say that he is a moral man, is nothing, unless his morality is based on religion. These may all have been, in some sense, ends of his being, but they were not the chief end, and a thousand woes must rest upon his head if he even regards them so.

Let me illustrate my idea. There is a father, a kind benevolent father, who assigns to a son various items of service, all of which he wishes him to perform *in a particular way*, and within a specified time. In order that he

own views may be fully understood, he describes them in writing, and hands the writing to his son. But in regard to the first duty on the list, the father makes a very special charge. Putting his finger on it and pointing it out again and again, he tells the son with deep emphasis, that this service must be attended to whatever else is omitted. Now, suppose the son goes his way, and performs every duty but this one. At length he comes to give in his account, and he does it with a great deal of self complacency, as if nothing further, could with propriety be required at his hands. Ah, cries the disappinted father, this is all well, as far as it goes, but how came you to neglect that first duty? You surely could not suppose that fidelity in these other matters, could atone for the total neglect of that.

Now God is such a Father, men are such sons. They have a list of their duties. At the head of these stands religion. They are commanded to seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness. But they attend to every thing else, and neglect this. Their bodies are clothed, their houses are made comfortable, their debts are paid, all the claims of good citizenship are regarded, but God, and the soul, and heaven, and hell are lost sight of. Ah this is the boasted wisdom of the world. Well is it called foolishness with God.

4. Every man's truest and firmest friends desire that he should become a Christian.

Is it unsuitable to include God among these friends? Listen then to his language. In one place he entreats, O do not this abominable thing that I hate. In another, he expostulates, why do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? In another, he encourages, let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, who will have mercy upon him, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon him. While in another place he threatens, he that believeth not shall be damned.

Think of the angels too. What is it that excites their interest as they wing their way on errands of mercy to this lower world? Upon what objects do they gaze with holy delight, as they pass over our cities, and towns, and villages? O, it is the penitent sinner that excites their regard. No matter how lowly he is in his own eyes, or how humble the cottage in which he lives, angels notice with intense interest, his tears of godly sorrow.

Pious relations also feel a deep interest in this matter. You can never know but by experience, how deep is the solicitude of a godly father, who sees his children growing up to trample the blood of the covenant under their feet. Words cannot express the feelings of a Christian mother, who enters day after day into her closet, exclaiming, what my son, what the son of my womb, and what the son of my vows. No language can describe the burden which lies upon the heart of some pious affentionate wife, whose husband is never seen to kneel in prayer by her side. These are things which must be felt in order to be understood.

Nay, we may go a step further, for *bad* men often wish to see their friends pious. The following case once occurred, a shrewd and intelligent father had embraced the cold and cheerless scheme of infidelity, while the wife of his bosom was a meek and devout Christian. They had a lovely daughter, who was suddenly brought to the borders of the grave. The father was sitting in an adjoining room conversing with a friend, when they were both summoned to the bed side, to witness the closing scene. As they stood by the pillow of death—the father, the mother, and this friend, the daughter raised her anxious eye to him who had been the instrument of her existence and said, Father I am about to die; do you wish me to die in the principles which you have taught me, or in those which my mother has taught me? This was a solemn question to the infidel parent. To waver now was virtually to abandon ground which he had long *been occupying. But conscience* even in this case was on the side of truth. Die, *said he, my daughter, die in the* principles which your mother taught you.

Yes, Hume himself would have said the same thing. Many a skeptical father and gay mother could be found, who would be grieved beyond measure to see a blooming and beautiful daughter giving herself up to the service of God. They would deem religion a poor appendage to the ball room, or the fashionable party. But let mortal disease invade the fair form of this same daughter, and bring her down pale and languid to her last bed, and their feelings would probably be entirely changed. The Bible, and the minister of the gospel, and prayer are not deemed out of place now. Ah, this is nature, in her extremity, coming to invoke the aid of religion. And shall she be branded with weakness for so doing?

5. The wisest and best men of every age have treated religion as a matter of high importance.

We do not ask you to call any man father on earth, or to pay any undue deference to mere opinions, by whomsoever such opinions are held. The religion of the Bible stands on a thousand times stronger basis than this. But who, that knows any thing of the world, is not aware that multitudes are governed almost altogether, in matters of this sort, by the authority of great names? The literary fame of some of the champions of infidelity has gone far to hide the enormity both of their creed and their conduct. But after all we need not fear to put the question at issue upon this ground alone. Immense as is the stake we hesitate not deliberately to make it, and we call upon the careless and unbelieving world to bring forth their strong array of bright and splendid names against God and religion. Let us stop a little to decide this point.

On our part we might refer for legislative wisdom to Moses, for sublime and lofty conceptions to Isaiah, for tender and moving pathos to Jeremiah, for pure doctrines and precepts to the Son of Mary, for close and manly argument to Paul, and for untiring benevolence, to all the Prophets and Apostles. But perhaps unbelievers will refuse to admit such testimony. Men of this stamp may be disposed to say of all such evidence, thou bearest record of thyself, thy record is not true. For the sake then of not seeming to take any advantage, we give up these names. Neither will we rely upon such cases as those of Solomon, and Daniel, and Nehemiah, though one of them was a king, another a statesman, and the third a courtier, and neither a minister at God's altar.

We are then to look about in the world to see on which side of this great question wisdom and virtue and goodness lie.

The great Lord Bacon is a host in himself. The early youth of this man, gave very striking indications of his future greatness, and he lived to scatter more light upon almost every field of knowledge, than was ever done by any uninspired man before. No other age can boast such a man. Now what did Bacon think about religion? Let the whole careless and skeptical world hear it, and be checked. "A smattering of philosophy may lead a man to infidelity, but a thorough insight into it will bring him back to the truth. The first principle of right reason is religion, and for my own part, I dare not die with any other thoughts." Thus felt, and thus spoke one of the profoundest men the world has ever seen.

Sir Isaac Newton is another name to which we turn with confidence. This man moved in an exalted sphere, when he counted the stars and measured the planets, and became as familiar with the face of the heavens, as the husbandman is with the surface of the fields over which he daily treads. But to speak of Newton as a philosopher merely, is not to tell half his worth. He delighted to look above the innumerable worlds and systems hanging in the immensity of space, to Him who made, and who governs them all. This man appears most truly great, when we see him laying down the telescope and taking up the Bible, when he turns aside from viewing the stars, to worship the babe of Bethlehem, and when he comes down from the proud eminence to which his talents

had raised him, to kneel at the foot of the cross. Does the careless world know that the great Newton was such a man?

The case of the celebrated Dr. Johnson, is equally in our favor. No name stands higher in English literature than that of Johnson, and from his decision in all matters of taste in criticism, it would be deemed almost presumptuous to take an appeal. But did this gigantic mind ever tremble and quail before the powers of the world to come? Yes, Johnson himself felt the need of religious consolations. You can scarcely conceive what an impression the things of eternity sometimes made upon his heart. He meditated, he reasoned he read the Bible, he wept, he prayed, and it was only the light of evangelical truth cheering his soul, that enabled him to die in peace and triumph. Thus ended the days of this wonderful man.

We might tell you too of the child-like piety of a Boyle, the refined taste of an Addison, the acute discrimination of a Locke, the strict conscientiousness of a Hale, and the unwearied compassion of a Howard. But we pause and ask for counter testimony. Exhibit a catalogue of the men, who have trampled religion under foot, and lived as if there were no God, and no judgment bar. Who are they? What are the enduring monuments of their wisdom? What the unfading traces of their goodness? There is Voltaire, with his dying breath cursing the companions of his folly, at one moment calling upon Christ for help, and at another blaspheming the name of the Nazarene. There is Paine, afraid to be left one moment alone in the dark, and at last a poor bloated, forsaken wretch, yielding up his soul in an agony of despair. Yes, and there is Hume too, the philosophic Hume, scarcely less an object of pity, not to say contempt. He plays at whist on his dying bed, and endeavors to keep his sinking courage up, by pitiful jests, on the very borders of the grave.

I beg you to weigh these cases. Then listen to Francis Newport, and hear him exclaiming just as the breath was leaving the body, "O, the insufferable pangs of hell and damnation." Contrast this with the last moments of the devout Payson. Hear him cry out, "The battle is fought, the battle is fought, and the victory is won, the victory is won forever." Then go and decide whether carelessness is reasonable. If it is wise and prudent to forget God, language has lost its meaning, death is an eternal sleep, and damnation is a dream."

6. Once more, the sorrows and death of Christ rebuke the apathy and indifference of men.

No one denies that there was such a man as Jesus Christ—if as Josephus says, it be lawful to call him a man—that he lived a blameless and benevolent life, and at last was put to death on the cross. The most careless man in the land will go as far as this. Now, if no more was true, we find enough in the history of the Savior's life, in the labors he performed, in the tears he shed, and in the agonies he bore, to melt any heart, not made of adamant. But if Jesus was Divine, if he died for a lost world, if there is no hope but in his blood, the case becomes interesting beyond all description.

Look at him as he preached, and toiled, and suffered, and mark the contrast between his anxiety and man's indifference. What multitudes are light and frivolous and gay; while he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief? Thousands of men can be found who never pray at all; but Jesus could spend every hour of a long and lonely night in prayer. They chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, but he was a companion of the afflicted. Why this difference? How is it that the Savior should have had such an overwhelming load of care upon him, and the very men for whom he bore it all, be merry and thoughtless?

See the holy sufferer. His cup was bitter, but rather than a world should die, he would not put it from his lips till it had been drained to its very dregs. *The work must* cost him his life, but his ardor was such, that he cried out, *how am I straightened till it* be accomplished? Follow him through his last

agony, and say, is it any wonder that angels lay down their harps, to look into this amazing subject?

Besides, what an influence has the story of Christ's life and death exerted on the state of the world? No book that was ever written has been read by such multitudes, or with such deep and solemn interest as the Gospel of God our Savior. No other history has awakened such emotions, or led to the putting forth of such efforts. While thousands have this precious volume in their hands, only to treat it with indifference, it finds its way to the garret of the poor widow, reaches the heart of the weather beaten sailor, visits the prisoner in his dungeon, and turns the heathen from his dumb idols.

Now in view of these several considerations, is there a man on earth who can lay his hand on his heart, and attempt a vindication of his own carelessness? Look at the subject in whatever light you please, and you cannot fail to see that it demands serious attention. Only go so far as to allow that the Bible may possibly be true, that there may be an eternal heaven and an eternal hell, and indifference to its communications is folly of the highest kind. But to believe in the reality of these things, and yet make light of them, is conduct for which we can find no appropriate name. It is not weakness, it is wisdom to be serious.

A good man was once asked, why he spent so much time in reading meditation, and prayer. He replied by simply uplifting his eyes and hands to heaven, and saying with great solemnity, "Forever, forever, forever!" This was reason enough for his seriousness, and so it is for the seriousness of any man. No one ever got some just idea of eternity, and of his own unpreparedness for that awful state, without having anxieties awakened in his bosom, such as he never felt before. It must be so in the very nature of the case. Let a deer be once smitten by the archer, and you will find it forsaking the herd and retiring into some quiet thicket, where it may bleed and die alone.

Contemplate facts as they occur. There is an active, enterprising man of business. Once he moved along among the gayest of the gay, but his heart has since been touched by the Spirit of the living God, and he now feels a load there which he neither knows how to carry, nor throw off. You may see him walking with downcast eyes and thoughtful step from the house of God to his own dwelling. His very aspect as he passes from one room to another, and the effort he makes to appear cheerful as he takes his wonted seat at the table, or the fireside, tell with sufficient plainness that there is agony in his soul. Oh, he has learnt that he is a sinner, and must be pardoned or lost.

Yonder too is an amiable intelligent youth. A few days since his feelings were as light and buoyant as the very air he breathed; but now he is borne down to the dust by an apalling consciousness of having offended God. What a change has taken place in so short a time! His countenance, his conversation, his deportment are all altered. Morning and evening, and perhaps at noonday, his seat in the family circle is empty, and were you to pass by his closet door, you might find him on his knees confessing his sins, and crying to God for mercy. The Bible has become his companion, and prayer his employment. Oh, is there any thing little or despicable in such feelings? An atheist may laugh at tears and prayers with perfect consistency, but no one else can. If a man believes the Bible, he must grant that seriousness, deep and daily seriousnesss is rational.

Permit me then to place this whole subject by the side of your consciences, and ask you to decide at once, whether you will be careless any longer.—You will not pretend that real happiness lies in the path which you are now pursuing. Your thoughtless indifference to the concerns of death, judgment, and eternity, may do for the bright and sunny portions of human life. But tell me plainly, does it answer for the silent and lonely hours of midnight? Has it any power to cheer and elevate the spirits while walking through a grave yard? Can it shed *light upon the soul* in the last struggle of dissolving nature? Th

you will not pretend. If you are ever to enjoy genuine peace of mind, in the dark and stormy season of human life, you must open your hearts to the tranquilizing and subduing influences of the gospel.

But let me beg you to make no delay. Not long since a graduate of one of our colleges was heard to say, I have finished my collegiate education, I will now devote two years to the study of a profession, then I will take one year to see what there is in that mighty thing they call, religion. Yes, so proposed this blooming, careless youth, but God had far other results in view. Before this design was half accomplished, the unhappy young man suddenly fell sick, was seized with delirium, and died without hope. Oh my friends, my young friends, if ever you mean to consider this subject, begin now. The longest life is not too long to make your peace with God, and lay up an everlasting treasure in the heavens.

Before closing, I make you one more offer of pardon and eternal life. In the name of Him who bled and died for a lost world, I assure you, if you will repent and believe the gospel, you shall never perish but have everlasting life. Jesus Christ has authorized me to tell you, that there is boundless efficacy in his blood. He has no pleasure in your death. His heart is as full of compassion, as when he hung expiring on the cross. Only forsake your sins, and put your trust in Christ, so iniquity shall not be your ruin.

VAIN man, thy fond pursuits forbear;
Repent!—thy end is nigh!
Death, at the farthest, can't be far—
Oh, think before thou die!

Reflect—thou hast a soul to save:
Thy sins—how high they mount!
What are thy hopes beyond the grave?
How stands thy dread account?

Death enters—and there's no defence—
His time, there's none can tell:
He'll in a moment call thee hence,
To heaven—or to hell!

Thy flesh, perhaps thy chiefest care,
Shall crawling worms consume:
But ah! destruction stops not there—
Sin kills beyond the tomb.

To-day, the gospel calls; to-day,
Sinners, it speaks to you:
Let ev'ry one forsake his way,
And mercy will ensue.

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SERMON CCXXVIII.

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RECONCILIATION WITH GOD.

Matthew v. 25, 26. *Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*

Our Lord, in the preceding verses, enjoins it upon the man who had injured his christian brother, to go and be reconciled to him immediately, before he presumed to go to the altar of God, and there offer his gift. From this controversy between man and man, he makes a natural transition to the controversy between man and God, and directs the sinner to agree with his offended Maker quickly, while in the way of reconciliation with him, lest he should lose the precious opportunity of obtaining his favor, and fall under his just and everlasting displeasure. The text, without any further comment, obviously contains this serious and interesting truth:—

That sinners must perish for ever, unless they become reconciled to God, their adversary, while he is in the way of reconciliation with them.

I. I shall show, what is implied in God's being an adversary to sinners.

II. Show what is implied in God's being in the way of reconciliation with them. And,

III. Show that if they refuse to be reconciled to him, while he is in the way with them, they must perish for ever.

I. What is implied in God's being an adversary to sinners.

Adversary, signifies one who is an opposer, an antagonist, an enemy. In this sense it is used in the text, to denote that God is at variance with sinners, has a controversy with them, and is alienated in his heart from them. This, however, does not mean, that he feels any such thing as malevolence towards them; for he is good unto all, and his tender mercies are over all his works; God feels truly benevolent to the evil and unthankful, to the disobedient and most incorrigible sinners. But his being an adversary to them implies, that he is really *displeased* with them. His benevolence hates their selfishness; his holiness hates their sinfulness. He is of purer eyes than to behold sin, without the utmost abhorrence and detestation. His infinite love to holiness creates an infinite aversion to unholiness. He is angry with the wicked every day, and his wrath continually abides upon them, when they lie down, and when they rise; when they go out, and when they come in; when they tread his courts, and when they neglect to attend them; and all the while they live to themselves, instead of living to him. He knows, that every imagination of the thoughts of their heart is evil, only evil, and that continually. He knows that all their affections are alienated from him, and all their actions are so many transgressions of his holy law. It is, therefore, morally impossible for him not to be displeased with them, while their hearts and lives are thus full of evil. And now his holy displeasure at sinners necessarily makes him their adversary, and sets him against them. How often does he say to the sinner, "I am against thee?" He says this no less than twelve times in the prophets. This is an awful declaration! It implies not only that the heart of God is against sinners, but that all his perfections are against them. His benevolence, his goodness, his justice, and his omnipotence, are all arrayed against them. "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no God with me; I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal; neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand; I lift my hand to heaven and say, I live for ever. If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." Such a holy, just, and omnipotent adversary is God to sinners; who not only hates them, but, if they continue

impenitent, will assuredly punish them as long as he and they exist. But yet,

II. He is in the way of reconciliation with them; which implies,

1. That he proposes terms upon which he is willing to be reconciled to them. And the terms he proposes are extremely gracious and condescending. He requires nothing more on their part, in order to a reconciliation, than that they should love him, whom they have hated without a cause, and return to him, from whom they have unreasonably revolted, in the way he has appointed. He has appointed his Son to be a Mediator between him and them. And as Mediator, he has suffered and died in their room, and made complete atonement for their sins; so that God can, through the medium of his Son, become reconciled to them, as soon as they renounce their enmity, "accept the punishment of their iniquity," and cordially embrace the divine Redeemer. It was great condescension and grace in God to take the first step towards a reconciliation, by removing an insurmountable obstacle in the way of it, by giving the Son of his love, to suffer and die on the cross, to open the door of mercy; and it is great grace in God, after this, to propose a reconciliation upon the terms of the gospel. But he does graciously tender to sinners, pardon and salvation upon the terms of love, repentance, and faith. He says to them, "I love them that love me; and they that seek me early shall find me." "Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord." "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price. Incline your ear, and come unto me; hear, and your soul shall live. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Here God proposes to be reconciled to sinners, and invites them to accept his gracious proposals. He treats them more kindly than they treat one another. *They* insist, that the offender ought first to propose terms of reconciliation to the offended, and not the offended to the offender. But God makes the first advance towards a reconciliation with sinners, and proposes the most reasonable terms; which demonstrates, that he is more ready to be reconciled to them, than they are to him. He is in the way of reconciliation with *them*, while they are fleeing from *him*.

2. God not only proposes terms of reconciliation to sinners, but waits upon them to accept his gracious proposals. They ought to agree with their adversary quickly, while he is in the way of reconciliation with them; but being averse to a reconciliation, they are extremely prone to refuse and neglect to comply with his gracious proposals. Instead of returning to God, they love to wander from him; and instead of accepting his terms of mercy, they obstinately reject them, for which they deserve to be denied any further invitations. But God still waits to be gracious to them, and exercises great patience and forbearance towards them. He had rather they would accept than reject his offers; he had rather save, than destroy them. This he solemnly declares in his word, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God and not man." Agreeably to these merciful declarations, God has exercised astonishing patience towards sinners in every age of the world; nor has his forbearance yet failed. He is this day waiting upon thousands and millions of delaying sinners, who have, for many years, refused to hear and accept the terms of salvation. So long as God thus continues to propose terms of mercy to sinners, and waits upon them to accept his terms, he is certainly in the way of reconciliation with them. His long patience and forbearance towards them, are plain and infallible tokens of his sincere desire to be reconciled to them. His conduct perfectly harmonizes with his declarations.

3. God not only proposes terms of reconciliation to sinners, and waits upon them to accept the terms he proposes, but he uses a variety of means to induce them to become reconciled to him. He has appointed and authorized an order of men to carry on a treaty of reconciliation with mankind, and directed them to exhibit the most solemn and weighty motives before the minds of his revolted subjects, to acquaint themselves with him and be at peace. Hence, says the apostle, "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though

God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." When a prince not only proposes terms of reconciliation to his rebellious subjects, but also sends one ambassador after another, to beseech and persuade them, by the most powerful motives, to become reconciled to him, he gives the most convincing evidence that he sincerely desires to bring about a mutual reconciliation, that he may forgive and save them from deserved punishment.

But besides his speaking to sinners by his ambassadors, who employ the words of reconciliation, God speaks to them by his providence, which has a voice which they are constrained to hear, and a meaning, which they are constrained to understand and feel. This is a method which he employs after all other means of reconciliation have failed. "Therefore, thus saith the Lord of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them; for how shall I do for the daughter of my people?" And again he says, "I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face; in their affliction they will seek me early." Invitations of mercy and scenes of prosperity often harden the hearts of sinners, but afflictions have a more powerful tendency to melt and soften their hearts. These melted and softened the heart of the obdurate Manasseh. God often melts, and softens, and purifies the hardest hearts in the furnace of affliction, whilst he is in the way of reconciliation with sinners. In a word, he leaves no proper methods unemployed to bring them to a cordial reconciliation upon the terms of the gospel. I now proceed to show,

III. That those who refuse to become reconciled to God, while he is in the way with them, must for ever perish. This will clearly appear, if we consider,

1. That the day of grace and reconciliation will close with the close of life. Life is the only accepted time and day of salvation. It is only in this world that God is in the way of reconciliation with sinners. He will wait no longer than this life lasts, to be gracious to them. As soon as they cease to live, they will cease to be prisoners of hope. Christ exhorts the sinner in the text to agree with his adversary quickly, lest his delay should prove fatal. In the parable of the ten virgins, he taught delaying sinners, that the door of mercy will, ere long, be shut against them. In the parable of the talents, he taught slothful, delaying sinners, that the close of life will put a final period to all opportunities of doing and getting good. And in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, he taught both saints and sinners, that death will close their probationary state, cause a final separation between them, and fix them in an unalterable condition. If this be true, the

inevitable consequence must be, that those who neglect and refuse to comply with the offers of the gospel, through life, must perish for ever.

2. The Scriptures abound with the most plain and solemn declarations, that the finally impenitent and incorrigible shall be punished for ever. God declares, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, with all the nations that forget God." God says to sinners, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." Christ plainly and abundantly taught the certainty and perpetuity of the future punishment of the wicked. He said, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands, to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off; it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet, to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out; it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." At another time he said, "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." He commanded his apostles to proclaim to the whole world, "He that believeth shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." This will certainly be the doom of the finally impenitent; for Christ, the final Judge, has expressly declared, that in the great and last day, he will gather all nations before him; that he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats; that he will set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left; and that then he will say to them on his left hand, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels, and these shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." Thus "Christ will be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel, who shall be punished with everlasting de-

struction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."

But since these, and all other mere declarations concerning the future punishment of the finally impenitent, may be, and have been, criticised and explained away, by those who wish to pervert the gospel, it seems necessary to observe once more,

3. That the inflexible justice of God *requires* him to punish his incorrigible and irreconcilable enemies without ceasing and without end. This our Savior asserts in the text. "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him, lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." Christ considers all mankind as debtors, and their sins as debts, and therefore directs them to pray to God every day, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Impenitent sinners are under obligation to receive the due reward of their deeds at the hands of God; and this obligation they can never discharge by suffering, because suffering has no tendency to diminish their guilt, and desert of punishment. And since then, those who are once cast into the prison of darkness, can never pay the debt of punishment, which they owe to divine justice, their chains will never be taken off, nor they set at liberty, and restored to the divine favor, and the enjoyment of heaven; for Christ, who will pass judgment upon them, has forbidden them to be liberated until they shall have paid the utmost farthing;—which it is impossible, in the nature of things, that they should ever pay. The same immutable justice of God, which requires him to punish the finally impenitent at all, equally requires him to punish them as long as they deserve punishment, which will be for ever; and the same wise and benevolent purposes, which can be answered by their temporary punishment, can be equally answered by their eternal punishment. Indeed, there is not a single objection that can be made against the wisdom and justice of God, in punishing the finally impenitent for ever, which can not be made, with equal force against his wisdom and justice in punishing them at all in this world. Accordingly, the apostle Peter infers the future and eternal punishment of the ungodly, from the punishments which have actually been inflicted upon sinners in this world. Speaking of those who, in his day, brought in and propagated damnable heresies, he says, "Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered

them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ENSAMPLE unto those that after should live ungodly; the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the *unjust* unto the day of judgment to be *punished.*" All the natural evils, calamities, and punishments that ever have been inflicted upon mankind in this world, are so many evidences, that God will punish the finally impenitent *for ever* in the world to come. For those, who do not become reconciled to God upon the terms of the gospel, while he is in the way with them, will for ever remain irreconcilable enemies, and manifestly deserve the tokens of God's everlasting displeasure; and his immutable justice will require him to give them the due and everlasting reward of their deeds. Their punishment will be as lasting as their ill desert, and this ill desert will be as lasting as their existence, which will never end.

IMPROVEMENT.

1. If God be in the way of reconciliation with sinners; then those who do not realize this, are awfully stupid. This is the case with all who do not realize, that God is their adversary, and yet disposed to be reconciled to them.

2. If God is in the way of reconciliation with sinners; then those are very *unwise*, who continue to displease him. There are many who are so unwise. They take occasion from his terms of mercy, his patience, and his providence,—to disregard all he says to them, and does for them.—This is very unwise.

3. If God is in the way of reconciliation with sinners; then those are very obstinate, who complain of the terms, which he proposes,—these are as reasonable and accommodating as possible.—They have injured God, but God has never injured them.

4. If God is in the way of reconciliation with sinners, upon reasonable and gracious terms; then those are very presumptuous, who propose their own terms to God.—Many are so presumptuous. They insist, that God shall return to them first, and assure them, that he never will cast them into hell.

5. If God is in the way of reconciliation with sinners; then it is their immediate duty to be reconciled to him; the terms are perfectly reasonable, practicable, and may be withdrawn any day.

6. If God be in the way of reconciliation with sinners; then his treatment of them in this world, will completely justify his treatment of them in the next—in the eyes of all heaven, in the eyes of all the damned, in their own eyes.

7. This subject calls upon all to enquire seriously, whether they have become reconciled to God. Sinners, have you ever realized that he is your adversary? Have you become reconciled to him? Have you been reconciled upon his own terms? Have you chosen his terms rather than any other?

8. This subject shows the dangerous state of sinners—Life and death are set before them—the terms are proposed—God is waiting—but his patience may soon end—can your hands be strong, and your hearts endure, when he shall deal with you as incorrigible enemies?

SINNERS, the voice of God regard;
His mercy speaks to-day;
He calls you by his sov'reign word,
From sin's destructive way.

Like the rough sea that cannot rest,
You live devoid of peace:
A thousand stings within your breast,
Deprive your souls of ease.

Your way is dark, and leads to hell;
Why will you persevere?
Can you in endless torments dwell,
Shut up in black despair?

SERMON CCXXIX.

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THE PROPRIETY AND DESIGN OF AN ANNUAL FESTIVAL OF THANKSGIVING.

Leviticus xxiii. 39. *Also in the fifteenth day of the month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord, seven days.*

The text forms a part of the directions given for the observance of the feast of tabernacles. Among the Jews, this was a very important and interesting festival. It was to be observed once in a year, and was significant of their gratitude to God for common and for more special blessings. In this chapter, we have an account of various feasts or festivals, which were designed to remind them of their dependance and of their obligations to their common Parent, the Giver of all good. Of these, the principal were the passover, the feast of weeks, and the feast of tabernacles. The two latter had a more special reference to temporal blessings, and seem to have been instituted as commemorative of the divine goodness in ordering the seasons of the year, and thus amply providing for the subsistence, convenience and comfort of his dependant creatures.

The direction given in the text has reference to such a festival. "When ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord." We shall consider,

I. The propriety of such a festival, and

II. What is implied in the text in regard to the manner in which it should be observed. It is a festival of thanksgiving, and has respect to particular circumstances specified. The term festival is significant of joy and gladness, and is applied to those observances, which, by divine appointment, were designed to commemorate particular and signal manifestations of the divine goodness. They were joyful occasions, rendered so by the tokens of heaven's favor to those who were called upon to share in the duties enjoined. In this festival of thanksgiving, there is a remembrance of God's goodness in relation to a specified

object,—viz., the gathering in the fruit of the land. The propriety of observing such a festival will appear,

1. From a view of man's dependance.

Man is a dependant being. Of himself, he can do nothing, and unsupported by a higher power, he cannot exist a single moment. That he should feel, acknowledge and recognize his dependance upon that higher power, is connected with the exercise of such feelings, and the cultivation of such affections, as are most becoming an accountable being. Whatever tends to awaken and keep alive such feelings, must be regarded as most desirable; especially when we recur to the fact, that there is in man such a proneness to forget God, his Creator and Benefactor, and practically at least to adopt the language, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." That such a festival as this is calculated to produce this effect, appears probable from the fact, that it calls our attention to the subject. It reminds us of what we might not otherwise be so likely to bear in remembrance. It brings the great subject of our dependance directly before the mind, and is calculated at least to awaken some consideration upon the interesting relations which we sustain in the present state of our being. It is not that man is laid under any stronger obligations of gratitude at this particular season, than he is at other times in view of the same blessings; but that by a special and public recognition of his dependance and of the divine goodness, he may express before men, his sense of obligation resting upon him, and use it as an occasion for exciting higher exercises of gratitude and joy.

2. The propriety of such a festival seems evident from the *magnitude of the blessings, which furnish the occasion of its observance.* It is in commemoration of that power and goodness, by which the earth is caused to yield her increase. It is when ye have *gathered in the fruit of the land.* It is with reference to the continuance of those means, by which the existence of man is prolonged. Unless the providences of God are so ordered that the fruit of the land may be gathered in, what is man? What would be the condition of his race unblessed with food and raiment, and the more exalted individual and social blessings, which cannot be enjoyed without the subordinate means by which life is upheld, and its comforts multiplied? We at once perceive that the occasion is peculiarly interesting, inasmuch as it tells of the loving-kindness and tender mercy, without which, the condition of man would be dreary, and desolate and sad beyond whatever we have experienced, and beyond what we may ever have conceived.

We are apt to lose sight of the value and magnitude of these bless-

ings of a common providence, from the fact that they *are* common. But we may suppose the case reversed. Consider mankind toiling in the cultivation of the earth, and the earth refusing to yield her increase, the enriching showers withheld, and the fields, instead of being clothed with the exuberant fullness of their productions, doomed for a single year to barrenness. What a different aspect would be spread over the face of society! What desolation of these domestic endearments and comforts,—what sorrows of heart and what sadness of countenance would take the place of the cheerful countenances, and joyful hearts, and fireside enjoyments, and social privileges, which now, at every step, speak forth the beneficence and the tender-mercy of Him who crowneth the year with his goodness. And is there not ever something in our condition, in the circumstances which attend our lives, or in the seasons of the year, calculated to remind us, that for these common blessings we are wholly dependant; that the tenure upon which we hold them is the mere good pleasure of Him, who has power to turn the sun into darkness, and the moon into blood,—to cause the stars to fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven to be shaken, and all the tribes of the earth to mourn? Sometimes His righteous sovereignty is displayed in withholding the sunshine in harvest, and in permitting the mildew and the flood to disappoint the hopes of the husbandman, and to remind us of our daily dependance upon His merciful providence. In some instances, the desolating flood is permitted to sweep over the fertile field, and to lay waste the promising fruits of human industry; and the plenteous showers have descended in the time of harvest, presenting obstacles in the way of a safe ingathering of the fruits which industry, with the divine blessing, had reared. Again, while sometimes refreshing showers are withheld, and we look upon the fading and withering aspect of the vegetable kingdom around us, we cannot but feel our own impotency in causing the grass to grow for cattle, and the herb for the service of man. Easily might He, who is infinite in power, have shut up the windows of heaven till this moment; easily might He have sent blasting, and mildew, and sterility, so that the earth would not have yielded her accustomed fruits, or when brought forth, they would have been rendered useless.

But how does He ever deal with us?—not only better than are our deserts, and often better than our fears. "All eyes wait upon Him, and He giveth them their meat in due season." And this ample provision, made for the subsistence of man and beast, has an important bearing upon all those higher sources of enjoyment, which render life most valuable and desirable. The civilization and refinement, the social

pleasures and social privileges, the means and the efforts of benevolence, are all directly promoted by the blessing which brings to man a full and competent supply of his temporal wants. The magnitude of the blessing appears the more conspicuous, when we consider it as forming the basis, upon which is reared the fair superstructure of every well-ordered and happy society. So that when, through the divine munificence, the fruit of the land has been gathered in, it is highly proper that a festival of thanksgiving should be observed.

3. Such a festival is proper on account of its social character. Mankind are not only dependant, but are alike dependant upon the same Being. They owe to Him the same obligations. And here is a subject in which they have a common interest. The public observance of such a festival is calculated to cement the bonds of union and good fellowship between man and man, while they are brought together to rejoice in the same thing, to recognize the same wise and gracious Providence, and to give thanks for the same benefits. Here they are led unitedly, and in their social character, to contemplate the divine munificence in which all share a part, and to fix their thoughts upon the loving-kindness of Him, in whom every man lives, and moves, and has his being. Such is the practical benefit of those institutions and observances which bring before the minds of men their common obligations to their common Parent,—which, by reminding them of their entire dependance upon the same Almighty Being, lead them to think of their mutual dependance upon each other, and the mutual obligations which rest upon them. The direct tendency of such a public observance, is to awaken kindred feelings in bosoms where kindred feelings ought to reign. And it is designed to awaken those higher sensibilities towards the Giver of all good, without which, man grovels like the beasts that perish, and sinks in brutal debasement, while he ought to be rising in holy aspirations; and walks in darkness, while he might rejoice in the light of the Lord.

4. The propriety of such a festival is inferred from the fact, that it has the sanction of divine authority. Our text affords the proof. No rule which Jehovah has laid down for the regulation of human conduct, under given circumstances, can, with propriety, be regarded as having ceased to be binding *in its spirit*, until the *reason* of that rule ceases. It is as right and proper that men should abstain from theft or covetousness, and that they should honor their parents, and remember the sabbath day to keep it holy, as when the law was given from Sinai. It is as right and proper that men should now do unto others, as they would that others should do to them, as it was when our Savior deliv-

ered the precept. The *reason* of the law remaining, determines the *perpetuity* of the law. Every *moral* law at least, is of perpetual obligation, and is binding under all circumstances of society. So in relation to any external religious observance, it having been once enjoined by divine authority, we may at least infer the *propriety* of its continuance, so long as the reason for that observance exists. So long therefore as seed time and harvest continue, and men are permitted to gather in the fruit of the earth, we may conclude that it is proper and suitable to their condition and circumstances, that they should keep a feast unto the Lord. It is on this principle of interpretation of the divine will, as disclosed in the sacred volume, that our pious ancestry established the usage of an annual thanksgiving.

II. Let us now attend for a moment to what seems to be implied in our text in regard to the *manner* in which it should be observed. And it is all implied in the direction that it should be kept *to the Lord.* It being spoken of as a feast, seems to imply a free and pleasant participation of the bounties of His providence, and that in this participation, they should be regarded as coming from his hand. No excess however is sanctioned by the idea of a feast. The passover and the Lord's Supper are properly denominated feasts. And they are institutions which from their nature preclude all excess or extravagance. A feast kept to the Lord necessarily implies the propriety of attendance on religious services, adapted to the nature of the occasion and its obvious design. That it may be kept *to the Lord*, it is necessary,

1. That there should be cherished a remembrance of His merciful providence, particularly in relation to the specified object of the festival; which is to celebrate the divine goodness in causing the fruits of the land to be gathered in, and thus continuing the means necessary for the preservation of social order aud happiness. There is a strong liability in many to keep this festival to *themselves* rather than *to the Lord.* And not unfrequently it is entirely perverted from its original design, inasmuch as in the observance of it, the Lord is not regarded. By multitudes who feast upon the bounties of Providence, that Providence is wholly forgotten. Where the gratification of appetite and the excitement of mere animal pleasure are the principal or only objects kept in view, it is plainly evident, that persons regard *themselves* merely in the festival. In order that it be truly kept to the Lord, it is necessary that any excessive indulgence of appetite should be scrupulously avoided, because this is strictly forbidden under all circumstances. It moreover utterly disqualifies the soul for the rational and holy contemplation of the character, attributes and government of Jehovah.

2. That this festival may be kept to the Lord, it is further necessary that we should render unto Him thanksgiving and praise. This is a duty incumbent upon each individual, and must proceed from the heart. Public and social demonstrations of gratitude may be confined wholly to the outward form, while the heart has no share in them, and the soul is left unblest and joyless in view of the loving kindness of the Lord. But on this occasion, men are called upon especially to praise the Lord; to lift up the heart in thankfulness to Him who visiteth the earth, and watereth it, who maketh it soft with showers, and blesseth the springing thereof; who causeth the pastures to be clothed with flowers, and the valleys to be covered over with corn.

3. It is important, in order to a suitable and becoming observance of this occasion, that we should make a consecration to the Lord of ourselves and of those bounties of His providence, of which He condescends to make us his stewards. He rightfully demands that we present our bodies a living sacrifice holy and acceptable to Him. And every act of religious worship and homage, every observance designed to commemorate His goodness and mercy towards ourselves, should lead us to cherish the dispositions which are pleasing in His sight. He exhibits himself not only as the object of supreme love and spiritual worship,—but as our high Exemplar in goodness and mercy, and truth and holiness. As He has not left himself without witness in that He does good to all, so He requires that they should be merciful even as their Father in heaven is merciful, and that they should never forget to do good and to communicate. What has any man that he has not received from the great Father of lights, the Giver of every good and perfect gift? And is not the earth the Lord's, and the fullness thereof? Is he not, by bestowing upon his creatures the means of subsistence and comfort, reminding them of their obligation to imitate his beneficence in proportion to the means put into their hands? While then on this occasion his own goodness to the children of men is celebrated, while they engage in public demonstrations of thankfulness and joy, in view of the divine munificence, displayed in crowning the year with plenty, —let them consider by what acts of benevolence,—what deeds of mercy,—what efforts to do good according to their several ability, they may honor the Lord with their substance, in administering to the necessities of others, in alleviating human wretchedness, in sustaining and advancing the institutions of religion, and in promoting the order and welfare of society. It may not always be expedient or practicable on this particular day, to deal thy bread to the hungry, to bring the poor into thy house, or to clothe the naked, but this joyous anniversary should

certainly be improved, for exciting and invigorating benevolent affections and for forming charitable designs and cultivating resolutions of extensive usefulness. The Lord demands this at our hands, that we should do whatever may be in our power to promote the advancement of his cause, to cherish and support the institutions which he has appointed and which are designed to bless mankind. And this surely, is an appropriate season for considering our obligations to an unreserved consecration of ourselves to the Lord.

In view of the subject, it becomes all to enquire whether this festival has been by them observed, in times past, agreeably to its original design, and to be humble and penitent in view of past ingratitude. Many such seasons may have passed away, without any suitable endeavors on our part, to secure the objects which ought to have been kept in view. Has it not been in too many instances regarded only as a day of feasting, while He, by whose beneficence our houses are filled with plenty, has been forgotten?

And may we not see how desirable it is, that we earnestly seek to come up to the measure of duty and gratitude implied in keeping a festival to the Lord? If this object is fully attained, it may well be regarded as a season of rejoicing. It should be made a festival of thanksgiving and praise to Him who orders the seasons in mercy, and who is ever well pleased with the grateful homage of his creatures. Well may we rejoice in the Lord and be joyful in the God of our salvation.

And while you praise the Lord for His goodness this year also,—enlarge your charities, and extend your benevolent regards over the wide field which is spread out before you. The field is the world. And it presents the objects which demand the exercise of your beneficence, that you may prove yourselves to be the children of Him who causes the sun to shine upon the evil and the good. They that are prepared to keep this festival to the Lord, will be prepared to enlarge, and not to circumscribe, within narrow limits, their efforts to do good. The institutions of religion are to be supported—the hungry to be fed, and the naked clothed. Nations are to be evangelized and reclaimed from the darkness of heathenism. The dark habitations of cruelty are to be enlightened and cheered with the Sun of Righteousness. And it is in the use of such means as Heaven in mercy imparts, that the truly thankful will evince their gratitude to God in deeds of benevolence to man.

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SERMON CCXXX.

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CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Jeremiah, xxiii. 6. *And this is his name whereby he shall be called,*

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Names are intended to distinguish persons and things. They have been classed as either *descriptive* or *arbitrary*. Most of the names borne by men are of the latter kind. They are entirely arbitrary. That is, they have no particular meaning. They convey no expression of the characteristics, or qualities of those who bear them. At least, whatever might have been the case in the original application of those names, it is certainly so now. And, accordingly, they are transmitted from generation to generation to the successive members of the same families, whatever characters their respective individuals may possess. But, it has been remarked, that a large portion of the names employed in sacred Scripture, are descriptive, or expressive. They have a *sense* as well as a *sound*. This remark may be said to apply with peculiar force to the titles given in Scripture to our blessed Redeemer. He is exactly what his *names* describe and import. These names were designed to convey a knowledge of his glorious perfections and offices. But, among all the names given to this glorious Personage,—for that He is really the Person spoken of in this passage, it is impossible to doubt—I say, among all the names given to our divine Redeemer—we may confidently affirm there is none more expressive of his Mediatorial benefits, or more rich in important meaning, than that in our text. And this is the name, —the name by way of eminence, by which He shall be called—THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The word here translated *Lord*, is, in the original, JEHOVAH. So that the passage might, and, perhaps ought to have been rendered, JE-

HOVAH OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. This is one of the many passages, my friends, which plainly and unequivocally teach the real and proper Divinity of Christ. That he is "very God," and "very man" in the same mysterious Person. A doctrine which lies at the foundation of the Gospel, and of all the hopes and confidence of believers. Sublime and glorious doctrine! The eternal Son of God condescended to become incarnate! The Creator of all worlds appearing in the form of a servant! *Great, great* indeed *is the mystery of godliness; God manifest in the flesh!* It is true, both the heretic and the sceptic agree in seeing nothing in this doctrine but repelling difficulty. They find it ground for incessant objection and cavil. And even many a theoretical believer in this doctrine, who has never seen the evil, or felt the burden of sin, while he confesses that it is found in Scripture, can never appreciate its fundamental importance. But those who have been enlightened to understand and embrace the Gospel; those who have been made to see themselves miserable sinners; and who have *fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them*—all such perceive that the true and proper Divinity of our blessed Redeemer is the corner stone oft he whole fabric of Redemption; that it is absolutely essential to his character as a Saviour; a Saviour able and willing to "save to the uttermost." The humble believer pretends not, indeed, to comprehend the mystery of "Immanuel, God with us." He sees in a it length and breadth, and depth and height which pass knowledge. But he believes it on the simple authority of God's own word; and he sees in it a ground of hope, consolation and joy which must all totally vanish if this precious doctrine were expunged from the sacred volume.

This Jehovah, the Saviour, is declared to be "our righteousness." As the former part of this name is expressive of his Divinity; so the latter is expressive of his mediatorial character, and of his gracious relation to his people in that character. It refers to his atoning sacrifice, and to the benefits resulting from that sacrifice to the members of his spiritual body. The word OUR, in the text, is especially emphatical. That Christ is Jehovah, is indeed, as one well observes, a glorious fact, in which all holy beings, whether in heaven or on earth, will cordially rejoice. That he is Jehovah the righteous one, or who has brought in everlasting righteousness, is undoubtedly to all who are right-minded, also a precious fact, and a further illustration of his glory. But, blessed be his name! his people can go a step further, and claim him as *their own*. They can say, "He is Jehovah OUR righteousness." Each individual believer has a right, though he may not always be in a frame with confidence to claim the privilege—yet each individual believer has a right, to address the Saviour as Thomas did, *My Lord, and my God!* Or, in the endearing language of the Church—*My Beloved is mine and I am his. This is* the name by which He shall be called—the grand, the endearing relation in which both He and his people shall rejoice, and rejoice forever.

Let us inquire in WHAT RESPECTS, and in WHAT SENSE Jehovah the Saviour is the righteousness of his people.

Righteousness is conformity to a right standard. In this case, it is conformity to the only perfect standard, the will of God. Righteousness, so far as it may be attributed to redeemed man, is contemplated by

systematic writers in a three-fold sense;—as IMPUTED, INHERENT, and PRACTICAL. Now in each of these senses the Lord Jesus Christ may be called "the righteousness" of his people.

I. Jehovah the Saviour is the righteousness of his people, *because his submission to the penalty, and his obedience to the precept of the law of God, as their representative, being imputed to them, forms the sole ground of their justification before God.*

The doctrine of our pardon and acceptance with God, in virtue of a righteousness not our own, but rendered by Christ, as our Surety, and placed to our account, is laid down in Scripture so frequently, so distinctly, and with such a clearness and force of evidence, that I see not how it can be regarded in any other light than as a fundamental doctrine of the Gospel. If this great truth be not taught in the word of God, we may despair of finding any other truth there established.

God made man upright, in full possession of all the faculties necessary to perfect moral agency, and with all the dispositions which prompted to perfect obedience. But man fell. He transgressed the holy law under which he was placed; he became liable to the dreadful penalty which it denounced against transgression; and had no plea to make, why its righteous sentence should not be executed upon him. In this fall of our first parents we are all criminal sharers. "In *Adam*," says the Apostle, "all die." 1. *Cor.* xv. 22. "By one man's disobedience," he again declares, "many were made sinners." *Rom.* v. 19. We have all totally lost our original righteousness; so that there is now, by nature, "none righteous, no not one." We have all become guilty before God. And yet the same Apostle, inspired by the Spirit of the living God, declares that the "unrighteous cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither can corruption inherit incorruption. Thus awfully, then, are we situated. It is an unalterable maxim of Jehovah's government, that without a perfect righteousness to justify him before God, no man can be saved. But it is manifest, both from Scripture and observation, that we are all totally destitute of such a righteousness; having transgressed times and ways without number. A perfect righteousness, therefore, must be provided for us by another, or we perish. There is no alternative. The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. Man must die, or divine justice be dishonored and prostrated, or another, able and willing, must pay the mighty debt on his behalf;—"pay the rigid satisfaction, death for death."

This amazing alternative—an alternative which, however coldly it may be received by millions on earth, has filled all heaven with astonishment and praise ever since the hour in which it was proclaimed; this amazing alternative has actually been adopted in the counsels of eternal wisdom and love. A glorious Personage, able and willing; mighty to save, and disposed to save, was provided and sent forth, to obey the precept, and suffer the penalty of the law, as our Substitute; and, in this wonderful character, to bring in an everlasting righteousness for our justification. Yes, be astonished, O heavens! and be filled with grateful, adoring admiration, thou earth! the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, in the likeness of sinful flesh, condescended, in his amazing love, to take the place of the guilty and the perishing, and to become the victim of divine justice in their stead. His language, in the eternal

counsels of peace, was—"Let me suffer instead of the guilty. Let me die to save him. Deliver him from going down to the pit; I will be his ransom." This wonderful, this unparalleled offer was accepted. The Father was well pleased for the righteousness' sake of his Son. He accepted it as the price of our pardon; as that on account of which alone all who believe in his Son's name should be justified. So that Jehovah, the Saviour, may now with propriety be styled *the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* Or, as the text expresses it, *He is the Lord our righteousness. As by the offence of one, many were made sinners; so by the obedience of One, many were made righteous.* Mark, I entreat you, the pointed and unequivocal language of the Holy Spirit—*by the obedience of One, many are,* not only pardoned, but *made righteous.* Rom. v. 19.

But it will, perhaps, be asked, How can the righteousness of another be made *ours?* How can the righteousness of Christ become *our* righteousness? I answer; precisely in the same way in which we became sinners in consequence of Adam's sin; and in which Christ was *made sin for us;* that is, BY IMPUTATION. The posterity of the first man did not personally commit that sin which "brought death into the world with all our woes." But, in consequence of their covenant relation to him, the guilt of his sin was imputed to them; in other words, they were treated *as if* they had committed it; and the dreadful penalty of the loss of the divine image, and exposure to God's wrath and curse, followed to them all. In like manner, the blessed Redeemer, though he suffered so deeply, and died so ignominiously, had no sin of his own. He was *a Lamb without blemish, and without spot. He did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.* Yet the Scriptures tell us, *He was made sin for us.* This expression cannot mean that he was made a sinner, or that he really became personally a criminal, so as either to be regarded in that light by his Father; or in such a sense as to deserve punishment on his own account. To suppose either would be impious. But the expression, doubtless, means, that He, though perfectly innocent and holy in himself, was, in virtue of his covenant undertaking in our behalf, treated on our account, *as if* he had been a sinner. Having undertaken, in the eternal counsels of peace, to stand in the law-place of his people, and to bear the stroke of divine justice in their stead, so that the really guilty might escape, it pleased the Father to admit the substitution, and to accept the ransom. He, therefore, *laid upon him the iniquities* of his people, that is, he treated him, though really innocent, *as if* he had committed them, and exacted from him the uttermost farthing of the penalty. Certainly nothing less than this can be considered as the import of those emphatic passages—*He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.*—Isaiah, liii. 5. *He bare our sins,* (not his own.) *He bare our sins in his own body on the tree.*—1 Peter, ii. 24. *He delivered us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us.*—Galatians, iii. 13. *He died, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.*—1 Peter, iii. 18.

Now the fact of Christ having been "made sin," or "a sin offering" for us, in the sense just explained, is calculated to pour a flood of light on the doctrine of imputed righteousness. The cases are exactly analogous. Precisely in the same manner, and upon the same principle, that

our sin was made his, does his righteousness become ours, by—that is, imputation. *Imputation* means *placing any thing to the account of another.* What the Apostle *Paul* says to *Philemon*, concerning *Onesimus*, exemplifies the principle. *If he owe thee aught*, says the Apostle, *place it to my account, I will repay thee.* This is precisely the idea intended in the case before us. What Christ did and suffered as Mediator, was not personally done and suffered by us. There is no transfer of moral character in the case. This would be inconsistent with personal identity. Nay, it might be regarded as a moral absurdity. But, in virtue of the covenant of redemption, his righteousness, or what he did and suffered, as Mediator, is placed to the account of his people, *as if* they had performed it in their own persons. Though ungodly and undeserving in themselves, God is pleased to pardon, and to accept them as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness' sake of his beloved Son. What else can be meant, when we speak of being accepted of God and saved through the *merit of Christ?* What else can be meant when we read of such declarations as these?—*He is made unto us righteousness. He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth;* Rom. x. 4. *By the obedience of One many are made righteous;* Rom. v. 19. *He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him;* 2 Cor. v. 21.

This righteousness of Jehovah, the Saviour, is said to be *to all*, and *upon all them that believe.* That is, it is imputed to none—set to the account of none but those who receive Christ by faith. Faith is that great master grace by which we become united to the Saviour, and interested in his righteousness. This righteousness, therefore, is called *the righteousness of faith*, and *the righteousness of God by faith.* Hence also we are said to be *justified by faith*, and to be *saved by faith.* Not that faith, as an act of ours, is, in any degree, the meritorious ground of our acceptance with God. But all these expressions imply, that there is an inseparable connection, in the economy of grace, between believing in Christ and being justified by him, or having his righteousness imputed to us. Happy, thrice happy they, who can thus call the Saviour *theirs*, and who have thus "received the atonement." Though unworthy in themselves, they are graciously pronounced righteous by their heavenly Judge, on account of what the Mediator has done. Their sins, though many, are, for his sake, forgiven them. They are *freely justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.* They are *accepted in the Beloved.* Though most defective and unworthy in themselves, they are *complete in Him.* There is "no condemnation" to them now; and in the day of judgment they shall find, to their eternal joy, that there is both safety and happiness in appearing in the righteousness of Him who "loved sinners and gave himself for them," in "robes which have been washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb."

Such is the doctrine of our justification by the imputed righteousness o Christ. A doctrine which some profess to despise, as absurd; and others to abhor, as licentious. But it is neither absurd nor licentious. It is clearly taught in holy Scripture; and it is the glory of the Gospel. I repeat; it is the great vital principle of our holy religion—that we live by the death of another in our stead, and are accepted of God, not on account

of any thing that we have done, or can do; but solely on account of the perfect obedience unto death of Him who, *though he was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich.* Well did the great reformer, *Luther*, pronounce this the grand doctrine of a standing or falling Church. If this be abandoned, all is abandoned. Many other doctrines are important in their place; but this is all-important. If this be rejected, the life and soul of the evangelical system is gone;—the glory is departed. I feel myself to be a miserable sinner. I know that the God with whom I have to do is a Being of infinite holiness, who cannot, without denying himself, "clear the guilty." My first anxious inquiry, of course, is, How shall I come before God, my Maker, with any hope of acceptance? How shall I, a polluted, unworthy rebel, though deserving of eternal death, draw near to him with confidence? How can his justice be satisfied, and the dignity of his moral government maintained, and yet mercy extended to the guilty and vile? In a word, how can he be a just God and yet a merciful Saviour? This is what I need. Nothing less than this can reach my miserable case. But when I read in his own word, that *there is redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace;* Ephes. i. 7: when I read that *Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God;* 1 Peter, iii. 18: when I read that *the law is magnified and made honorable,* and all its demands fully satisfied by his obedience and sufferings as our Surety; so that now Jehovah can be *just, and yet the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus;*—this gives me light and life. This lifts up my sinking head. This leads me to the rock of hope. This kindles holy confidence and joy in my heart. This enables me, in the prospect of death and judgment, to *rejoice in the Lord, and to joy in the God of my salvation.*

To this doctrine of justification by the imputed righteousness of another, many objections have been confidently urged. To several of these it will be proper to advert, before we proceed to consider the other branches of the subject.

1. The first objection often urged against this doctrine is, that it contradicts reason, and is revolting to our sense of moral equity. Righteousness and sin being personal qualities, how, we are asked, is it possible that they should, in any case, be transferred to a Surety? This objection is founded in entire ignorance of the doctrine opposed. No such transfer is maintained by the friends of the doctrine in question. Such a transfer, if admitted, would not only involve the most obvious moral absurdity, as before suggested, but would also be fatal to the essential principles of the doctrine for which we contend. Neither personal qualities nor personal acts can be transferred; but the *consequences* of them can be and are transferred every day. Neither the holiness nor the sin of another can by any possibility become personally mine. No one believes or maintains such a doctrine.* But the *legal connection* of that which is done by another may attach to me. And if we, as a race, incur *any penalty* in consequence of the sin of Adam, or derive *any benefit* from

* "If my personal sin could be taken from me, and made the personal sin of another, he must then suffer for himself, and not for me, as I should be personally inno-

the undertaking and work of the Redeemer, the principle of imputation, as held by the orthodox, is strictly exemplified in each case, however it may be denied in words. In short, in contending for the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the penitent believer, we do not teach that the personal righteousness of the Surety is *infused into the sinner*, making him *worthy* of the divine approbation; but that the believer, though most unworthy in himself, both in the divine estimation and his own, and remaining altogether unworthy, is, nevertheless, treated, for the sake of the Redeemer's righteousness, *as if* he had rendered it in his own person. Surely in this there is nothing either unreasonable or revolting.

2 Another objection, often urged, to the doctrine that we are justified in the sight of God SOLELY on account of the righteousness of Christ, is, that the Scriptures declare, *that every one shall be judged according to his works.* Now, if this is true, it has been asked, how can it be reconciled with the idea that Christ's righteousness imputed to us, is the *only* ground of our reward? This is a most extraordinary objection to be made by a professed adherent to evangelical truth. Can any thing be clearer than the declarations with which the word of God abounds, that our own works form no part of the ground of our justification before God? *By the deeds of the law*, it is expressly declared, *shall no living flesh be justified.* Rom. iii. 20. And again, we are told; *By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;* NOT OF WORKS, LEST ANY MAN SHOULD BOAST. Ephes. ii. 8, 9. Now if our justification were, even *in part*, or in however *small a degree*, founded on our own works, it would contradict these plain Scriptures. How, then, are we to reconcile with these scriptures the declarations found in other scriptures, that in the great day, every man "shall be judged *according* to his works?" There is no inconsistency between them. It does not follow, because every believer is pardoned, and accepted as righteous *solely* on account of the merit of Christ; that, therefore, there can be no difference in the *measure* of the future happiness and glory of the redeemed. Though the merit of the Redeemer is of infinite value, would it not be a most unreasonable and unwise application of philosophical principles, to undertake thence to infer that the reward of all those who are saved by his blood, is also infinite in degree, and in all cases equal? Their degrees of conformity to God are different. Of course their capacities for enjoying the bliss and glory of heaven are different. Consequently their future reward, though not *for* their works, will be *according* to them, or, as to its degree, *measured* by them. The ground of their acceptance with God is the same; but those who

cent. He would not be under the imputation of my sin, because I should have none to impute; and I could not enjoy the benefit of his righteousness; because, on the one hand, I should require none; and, on the other, he, as suffering for himself, would have none to offer. So that here would be no representation, neither the substance nor the shadow of a vicarious atonement. Therefore, while my personal demerit must for ever remain my own, the *consequences* of it are borne by my glorious Surety. It is this which renders the imputation of sin to the Lord Jesus a doctrine so acceptable to the conscience, and so consoling to the heart, of a convinced sinner. And this simple distinction between a transfer of personal acts to a substitute, and the transfer of their legal connection, which is properly imputation, relieves the friends of truth from the embarrassment in which an incautious manner of speaking has sometimes involved them; and blows into air the quibbles and cavils of its enemies." Dr. MASON'S SERMON ON PARDON OF SIN IN THE BLOOD OF JESUS.

have loved most will enjoy most; and that without in the least degree impugning the doctrine, that we are equally indebted for all blessings, temporal and eternal, to the atoning sacrifice and merits of Him who died to purchase everlasting life for all who believe in his name.

3. A third objection to the doctrine of our justification solely by the imputed righteousness of Christ, is, that it takes away all excitement to a life of distinguished virtue and holiness. Does a sense of infinite obligation to the grace and love of Christ furnish no excitement to holiness? Does a view of the evil of sin, as seen in the sufferings and death of our ever-blessed Surety, furnish no motive to hate and avoid it? Does a view of the beauty of holiness, as seen in the perfect obedience of the Saviour for our sake, furnish no excitement to "go and do likewise?" Does the hope of living and reigning with Him to whom we are thus indebted, and beholding and sharing his glory forever, furnish no excitement to the highest attainments in obedience to his will, and in preparation for the holy joys of his presence? The Apostle Paul did not think so. In his most vivid representations of our indebtedness to Christ for every hope of mercy, he seldom fails to connect with them the most solemn exhortations, and the most tender and powerful motives to growing sanctification. See especially that animated declaration, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. *For the love of Christ constraineth us: because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.* But is it true, that his best righteousness ever did or can entitle any believer to the least reward—which the objection seems to suppose? Truly no son or daughter of apostate Adam ever performed a perfectly pure and unspotted act of obedience; of course, none have lived that did not need pardon, instead of meriting a reward. And yet a gracious God has been pleased to promise that every act of sincere obedience, on the part of his children, however imperfect, shall be rewarded *for Christ's sake;* and in the hope of this reward, his people are commanded to rejoice.

4. Finally, it is objected to the doctrine of justification by imputed righteousness, that, if it be true, there is no GRACE in our justification. If we are pardoned and accepted by God solely on account of a perfect equivalent, a full satisfaction to his law and justice, a complete meritorious payment of all dues, on the part of Christ, then, say objectors, we may claim the rewards of eternity, not as a *free gift*, but as our *right*—they cannot be justly withheld from us. True, the bestowment of eternal life with all its blessedness, upon the disciples of Christ, is an act of strict *justice* to *Him*, but of rich and wonderful *grace* to *them*. Was it no grace in the counsels of eternity to devise a plan of a substituted righteousness, instead of our own which had utterly failed? Was it no grace to provide a righteousness perfect and entire, wanting nothing, when we were perfect bankrupts before God, and had nothing to pay? What though the gift provided be a perfect compliance with all the demands of law and justice? is it, on that account, less an act of grace to those who needed and must have perished without it? No, it is the great glory of the Gospel, that, in the plan of salvation which it presents, righteousness and peace meet together, and justice and mercy have embraced each other: that, with the most wonderful stoop of mer-

cy that ever men or angels knew, there is combined the most awful manifestation of unbending justice that was ever presented in the annals of the universe. Hence the Apostle speaks of it as a glorious attribute of gospel grace, that it *reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.* Rom. v. 21. Surely, instead of cavilling that it is no grace because its exercise is connected with the most rigorous maintenance of the majesty of Jehovah's law, we ought rather, on that account, to regard it as a grace, the more unsearchably rich and glorious.

Thus, then, is Christ the righteousness of his people in their justification. Though they are most unworthy in themselves, yet Jehovah, by an act of wonderful grace, "freely pardoneth all their sins, and accepteth them as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness' sake of Christ, imputed to them, and received by faith alone." Thus He is said to "justify the ungodly;"—not to pronounce them *innocent;* not to make them personally *worthy* or *deserving* of his acceptance; for the whole gospel plan proceeds upon a directly opposite assumption. When, therefore, we are said, as we are, every where in Scripture, said, to be justified by the righteousness of Christ, the meaning is, not that his righteousness becomes personally and inherently ours, or that his holiness is in any way transfused into us, as the ground of our title to God's acceptance, which no one ever taught, and which it is a slander on the evangelical system to represent as making any part of it;—but, simply, that Christ's satisfaction to the penalty, and obedience to the precept of the law, are so placed to our account, in a moral or legal sense, that we are treated for his sake as if we had performed them in our own persons. We are not contemplated by infinite Holiness as personally innocent and pure; but for the sake of what our covenanted Surety has done and suffered, are accepted and treated as if we were. This is the Rock of Christian hope. On this ground the penitent and believing sinner, though conscious of numberless and aggravated sins, which render him utterly unworthy of the divine favor, may yet say, with humble confidence—*Nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.*

SERMON CCXXXI.

JEREMIAH, xxiii. 6. *And this is his name whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness.*

WE have seen that Christ is the righteousness of his people in regard to their justification, inasmuch as his sufferings and obedience are placed to their account as the sole ground of their acceptance with God. But there is also another, and no less important sense in which he is their righteousness, viz.

II. All the INHERENT RIGHTEOUSNESS, OR HOLINESS OF HEART

which they possess, is the purchase of his blood, and the gift of his Holy Spirit.

It is a plain dictate of reason, as well as of the word of God, that if we would see his face in peace, we must have not only a TITLE to heaven, but also a PREPARATION for heaven. It is just as essential to our eternal well-being, that we be restored to the *image* of God, as that we be restored to his *favor. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* Now, of this preparation for the joys of his presence, we are as entirely destitute, by nature, as we are of a title to his favor. "The carnal mind is enmity against God. And although our blessed Redeemer, by his sufferings and obedience, has "made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness," yet we are by nature disposed to reject the message of his love. We need to have a "new heart and a right spirit" given to us; a heart willing to accept the provided and offered mercy. We need not only to be delivered from the condemning sentence of a violated law, by a gracious justification; but also to be sanctified by the power of the Holy Spirit, and "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." The imputation of the Saviour's righteousness, of which we have spoken, takes away the *guilt* of sin, but not its *power.* Its power must be broken, and the love of it destroyed, or a most important part of the purpose for which the Saviour died would be unaccomplished. Accordingly, whom he justifies, them he also sanctifies. True, he is said to "justify the ungodly;" that is, he justifies those who are by nature ungodly, and have nothing in themselves to recommend them to his favor. But although our heavenly Father *finds* the subjects of his blessing ungodly, he does not *leave* them so. He makes them "all righteous"—inherently righteous; restores to them that image which they had lost; and thus prepares them for holy communion with himself here and hereafter.

The sanctification, indeed, which characterizes all the disciples of Christ, is not complete in the present life, nor does it exist in the same degree in all its happy subjects. Yet they all in some measure partake of it. For "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." There is in them all "some good thing toward the Lord their God." Their eyes have been opened; their hearts have been changed; the image of God has been in some measure restored to their souls; his love has been in some degree "shed abroad in their hearts, by the Holy Spirit given unto them." Though sin still exists in them, it no longer reigns. Its power is destroyed. They hunger and thirst after the knowledge of God, and conformity to God. They desire, they strive, they pray to be made "holy in all manner of conversation." Yet this personal, inherent righteousness the Scriptures assure us, in almost every possible variety of form, forms no part of the ground of our justification before God. *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy doth he save us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.* Titus, iii. 5. Still this moral purity is indispensable both as an evidence of our acceptance with God, and as a preparation for the holy society and joys of his kingdom.

But how is Christ, in this sense "the righteousness" of his people? It is the immediate and appropriate office of the Holy Spirit to sanctify the soul. It is his work to enlighten the mind, to convince of sin; to

"take of the things that are Christ's, and show them to us;" to purify the affections; to "turn us away from all our iniquities;" and to make us a holy and "peculiar people." For the commencement of the reign of grace in the heart in regeneration, and for every progressive attainment that is made in holiness; in "crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts; in dying to sin, and living to righteousness," we are indebted to the Holy Spirit of God. He "takes away the hard and stony heart out of our flesh, and gives a heart of flesh." He imparts that faith which purifies the heart, which works by love, and which overcomes the world. It is by his sovereign energy that the power of sin is gradually weakened in his people; and that they are "transformed more and more nto the divine image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

But it is only in virtue of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, that the Holy Spirit of sanctification is given. This is one of the great benefits which the Redeemer died to purchase for his people. Had He not suffered and died, and risen again, and ascended to glory, the Holy Spirit had never been given for the purification and comfort of his disciples. "If I go not away," said he, "the Holy Ghost will not come unto you; but if I go away, I will send him unto you." Not only so; but one great purpose for which the Son of God became incarnate, was that he might "sanctify the people with his own blood." Accordingly we are told, "His blood cleanseth from all sin." He "loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." And again it is said, "He gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." We may confidently say, then, that the sanctification of his people is as much a part of the purchase of the Saviour's blood as any one of the benefits which they receive. He laid down his life by covenant; a covenant which did not leave the salvation of believers imperfect or uncertain; but which secured as firmly their deliverance from the dominion and pollution of sin, as from its condemnation; and which ensured to every child of God conformity to his image, and preparation for the society and employments of a holy heaven.

Nor is this all. Every sincere disciple of Christ, being united to him by faith, receives from him, in virtue of this union, spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. As all the members of the natural body enjoy life, and health, and strength, in consequence of their connection with the head, so we are told that all the members of the body of Christ *grow up in all things in him who is the Head, even Christ, unto a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light.* Accordingly the Saviour, when he was about to leave his disciples and ascend to his heavenly throne, thus addressed them: *I am the vine; ye are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, so no more can ye, except ye abide in me. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing.*"—John, xv. 5, 6.

Thus is Christ "our righteousness," in reference to our personal, inherent sanctification. The gift of the Holy Spirit, for our cleansing

from the pollution of sin, was secured by Him as our Surety, in the covenant of redemption; was purchased by his atoning blood; and is imparted to every subject of his grace. when he sends forth the Holy Spirit, according to his promise, into the hearts of his people, for all the purposes of their sanctification and comfort; by whose agency they are more and more delivered from the power of indwelling sin, and finally prepared for the sinless and perfect enjoyment of God to all eternity. Thus is our great High Priest "made unto us sanctification." All the springs of our holiness are in him; and accordingly, the progress of the Christian in the divine life is represented by the Holy Spirit as a *growing up in all things in him who is the Head, even Christ, unto a holy temple in the Lord.*—Ephes. ii. 21; iv. 15.

Once more,

III. Jehovah, the Saviour, is "the righteousness" of his people, because all the PRACTICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS which essentially belongs to their character, and which they exhibit in their temper and lives, is wrought in his strength, and is the product of his grace.

Holiness of life is inseparably connected with holiness of heart. Genuine religion, indeed, always begins in the heart. There it is enthroned with governing power. But it is not *confined* to the heart. It shines forth in the life and conversation. "Show me thy faith by thy works," is a reasonable as well as a scriptural demand. Accordingly the word of God declares, that those who really believe in Christ are "careful to maintain good works." It represents them as *abounding in those works of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.* Philip. i. 2.

But by what means is this practical righteousness begun and maintained in the disciples of Christ? By their own strength? In virtue of any power or resources of their own? By no means. It is all given them; and given through the undertaking and work of the blessed Redeemer. Left to themselves, they would never perform a single holy act. Left to themselves, no "fruits of righteousness would ever adorn their character. If they are strong, it is "in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." From the living Vine is derived all that vital support and nourishment by which the branches, as so many grafts, live and grow, and bring forth fruit. From the Head is derived all that virtue by which life, and motion, and holy activity are imparted to all the genuine members. For all that they do to "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour," they are indebted to his grace. And for all the Scriptural hopes of persevering to the end, they have no other dependence than the promise and the faithfulness of their almighty Saviour. So the inspired apostle Paul evidently thought. *I live,* said he, *yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* Galatians, ii. 20.

Such, then, is the import of the all-comprehensive and all-important title of the Saviour in our text. He is "the righteousness" of his people in every sense in which redeemed sinners are or can be righteous in the sight of God. The righteousness by which they are justified before God is not their own, but wrought out by their almighty Substitute, and reckoned to their account by a gracious covenant arrangement. The righte-

ousness by which they are personally sanctified and made meet for communion with God, is not the product of their own wisdom or strength; but given them through the atoning sacrifice, and by the Spirit of Christ. And all that righteousness of life, by which their discipleship is manifested and advanced, is also the fruit of what has been done by the redeeming Saviour, and is daily sustained by his power and grace. "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners;" not to help them to save themselves; not to do *something* toward saving them; not to save them *in part;* but by his blood and Spirit to do all that was necessary to their salvation, and all that is involved in their salvation. Christ came not to make up the deficiencies of our righteousness, but to make out a complete righteousness for us; not to supply what is wanting in human merit; but himself alone to merit for us all we need, or shall need, through eternity. He and he alone must be depended on. His and his only must be all the glory."* Well may the Apostle say to Christians—"Ye are complete in him." Well may he speak of "the unsearchable riches of Christ," as reaching to all our wants and miseries. Well may he say of all boasting then, on the part of the redeemed sinner, that "*it is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith: for Christ is made unto us of God wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.*" Rom. iii. 27- 1 Cor. 1. 30.

In reviewing this subject a variety of practical reflections and inferences crowd upon the mind.

1. The representation which has been given, it is humbly hoped, will show the real nature of the *Gospel*, and how it is distinguished from the *Law*. Multitudes appear to labor under an entire mistake, not to say a radical error of conception, as to this point. They imagine that the Gospel is a kind of new and mitigated law: or, in other words, that it brings us information that God has repealed the old and rigorous law, (as they call it,) under which man was originally placed; and that it has revealed to us a lower and more indulgent law; a law making allowance for infirmity, and accepting of imperfect obedience, instead of a perfect, as the price of our justification. And, accordingly, some, when they speak of the atonement of Christ, and the merits of Christ, as contributing to our acceptance with God, mean nothing more than this, viz. That man, in the state in which he was placed, before the revelation of a Saviour, was bound to pay the uttermost demands of perfect obedience to the whole law, but, that Christ, by his sufferings and obedience, has prevailed on the Father to repeal, if I may so express it, the old and strict law, and to accept of obedience of a lower character. In short, their doctrine seems to be that the Gospel consists of a new law, much more indulgent and accommodating in its demands than the old; so that, now, perfect obedience is not even required by the law of God; that still our own obedience is the price of our acceptance; but that the *grace* of the Gospel consists in Jehovah having proclaimed, that *now*, for Christ's sake, he will accept of an imperfect obedience, and, on account of it, confer the joys and glories of heaven. Brethren, "we have not so learned Christ." This representation is not only incorrect, but when traced out

* Nevins' Remains, page 107.

to its legitimate connections and consequences, is replete not only with error, but with error of the most dangerous tendency. Others appear to teach, that, although the *pardon of sin* is granted entirely on the ground of the atoning sacrifice of Christ, *the rewards of heaven* are not conferred on that account, but are strictly, and in every sense of the term, *gratuitous*. This also is undoubtedly an error, and by no means an innocent one; for it denies to Christ a large part of his Mediatorial glory. Is He the purchaser of our *pardon*, but not of our *eternal life?* Surely this is not the doctrine of the Bible. The Gospel, as the inspired Paul teaches it, consists in this,—That it proclaims salvation from the curse of the law; and yet in such a wonderful way, that the law is not thereby repealed or dishonored; but, on the contrary, magnified, and made even more honorable than it could have been by the most rigorous infliction of its penalty on the transgressor. The Gospel represents all the blessings conferred on sinful men, including the pardon of their sins, the sanctification of their nature, and the eternal rewards of heaven, as granted solely, on account of the covenanted sufferings and obedience of the blessed Redeemer, as their Surety; and, of course, while purely gratuitous, and a wonderful display of grace to sinners themselves, as a dispensation of strict justice to the Redeemer. In short, it represents all spiritual good as coming to believers solely for the sake, and through the channel of Christ's atoning blood, and all as purchased by "the travail of his soul." This plan makes Christ, as the Bible makes him—ALL IN ALL. This is that "simplicity that is in Christ," which the Apostle Paul so highly commends, and from which he represents the carnal mind as so prone to deviate. This plan of Gospel truth is indeed, gloriously one and "simple." It ascribes all to the Saviour, and nothing to ourselves.

2. We may see, from the view which has been given of this subject, *how much, how unspeakably, we are indebted to Christ!* Every part of the economy of salvation, in all its stages, illustrates this. It is all a mere sovereign gift of grace to an undeserving lost creature, flowing through the undertaking and work of Christ. For its original contrivance in the eternal counsels of peace; for its execution in the fullness of time, by the appearance, and the obedience, and the infinitely meritorious sacrifice of the Son of God; for all the benefits which it includes, whether in soul or body, whether in time or eternity, whether taking away sin, inspiring hope, bringing effectual consolation, or conferring eternal reward;—all, all is the purchase of the Saviour's blood, and applied to the heart by the power of the Saviour's Spirit. Are we not, then, deeply indebted to him; immeasurably indebted? O, my Christian friends! truly we are indebted to him for *every thing*. Our own merit has purchased nothing; our power has accomplished nothing; wrought nothing. It is all a most costly purchase by *him*, but a free gift to *us*. Tell us not that there is no *grace* in all this, because the majesty of Jehovah's law and government was maintained without relaxation,—nay, magnified in its accomplishment by the payment of an immensely expensive ransom. Who does not see that it was unspeakably the *greater and more glorious grace* on this account? And I will add, we may measure our religious character by the degree in which we take pleasure in this view of the Gospel. So far as we possess the spirit of Christ, we shall be willing

to be in the dust of abasement, and to unite in that memorable song of the redeemed—"Unto Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and our Father, unto Him be glory forever and ever."

3. We may see, from the foregoing discussion, what is implied in SUBMITTING TO GOD, in the Gospel sense of that expression. Many seem to speak of submission to God as an exercise which has no connection with a Mediator. They exhort to it, without any reference to this medium of return; and they describe it without any hint of the appointed method of return to God. It is not denied, indeed, that all the revolted creatures of God are bound immediately to submit to him as their moral Governor. Even the devils, in their dark abodes, are under obligations instantly to lay aside their rebellion, and submit to the rightful authority of their Creator and Sovereign. But the question is, how do the Scriptures represent redeemed sinners as laying aside the weapons of their rebellion, and returning to the allegiance of their rightful Sovereign? Is it not always through a Mediator? Can sinful beings come, or really submit, in any other way? The Gospel knows of no other. To submit to God, then, according to the Bible account of this great matter, is to return to him in the humbling and self-denying way proclaimed in his method of reconciliation. It implies not only yielding our hearts and lives to Christ as our *King;* but also submitting our entire confidence to his righteousness, as our great *High Priest;* and giving up every power of the soul to him as our *Prophet* and *Teacher.* This seems to have been the Apostle's estimate. "*For they,*" says he, "*being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*"—Rom. x, 3, 4.

4. It is evident from the spirit of our text, that *all reliance on our own righteousness for acceptance with God, is direct opposition to the spirit and glory of the Gospel.* If the doctrine which has been delivered be just, then a spirit of self-righteousness is as directly hostile to the whole genius and economy of the plan of salvation by grace, as a course of the most enormous crimes can be. Yes, the proud self-justifier, who goes about to establish a righteousness of his own, cherishes a spirit and acts a part as directly anti-christian as the thief or the murderer. He is not, indeed, so offensive to his fellow-men, or so mischievous a member of society; but his real enmity to the Gospel is quite as essential and irreconcilable. He frustrates the grace of God. He sets at naught atoning blood. He makes God a liar. He attacks Christianity, if I may so express it, in its most vital part. He rejects its most precious character. Yes, brethren, whether you are aware of it or not; whether you think of it or not, all self-righteousness really speaks this horrid language, betrays this anti-christian spirit. It is practically saying, that the mission of the Saviour was unnecessary, and that his atoning blood is of no value. Nay, if a man hold that we are justified *partly* by the righteousness of Christ, and *partly* by our own obedience—he virtually denies Christ. He is "fallen from grace." Dear fellow-sinner! are you willing to do this? Are you willing to be found resting on such a foundation? Have you not sinned against God in ten thousand aggravated

instances? Is not your best righteousness so miserably defective and mingled with corruption, as to need pardon, instead of meriting reward? How then will you appear before a holy God without some better ground of hope than your own merit? You cannot safely appear with any other covering than the Saviour's righteousness. If you make the attempt, you die. No other covering can hide and cancel all your sins. It is freely offered. If you reject it, you are undone. If you are willing humbly and gratefully to accept it, it is yours for ever.

5. Finally, if the doctrine of our text be admitted, it is evident that *a consciousness of the deepest unworthiness, is consistent with the most confident and joyful hope toward God.* If our hope of divine acceptance were founded, either in whole or in part, on the merit of our own obedience, how could any reflecting mind, conscious of so much imperfection as attends our best services, cherish any thing approaching to a joyful assurance of the favor of God? Especially, if we were called to the dying bed of a penitent sinner, who had devoted his whole life to folly and sin, and was made willing to take refuge in the mercy of the Gospel at the last hour; what consolation could we administer to him, what hope could we encourage him to cherish, when he looked back on a life marked with so much defect and disobedience? Truly none. Doubt, anxiety, and fearful apprehension must reign in the purest minds. The most deeply spiritual minds would be most distressingly conscious of delinquency and corruption. But open to an awakened and anxious sinner the plan of mercy through a Redeemer. Unfold to his view the wonderful method by which *righteousness and peace meet together, and justice and mercy embrace each other.* Proclaim to him, that Jesus is a present and almighty Saviour, from the guilt of sin, by his most precious atoning blood; and from the power of sin, by his Holy Spirit. Show him that, although his own righteousness is but as "filthy rags," the Divine Mediator has *finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness;* so that God can now be rigorously just and yet save sinners; that in his infinite wisdom and love he has devised a plan by which, while the mightiest testimony of Jehovah's throne is borne against sin, the sinner is pardoned; by which justice is perfectly satisfied, while mercy is extended to the most guilty and polluted:—in a word, show him how all the rights of God's government are fully maintained, and even gloriously magnified, and yet a method devised of securing pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace, even to the chief of sinners; of providing a righteousness "perfect and entire, wanting nothing," to justify us before the face of our Heavenly Father, and to secure a title to eternal blessedness at his right hand,—tell the convinced sinner of all this, and light breaks in upon his mind. His drooping head is lifted up. His heart is filled with confidence and joy. He sees the darkness all cleared away, and an eternal Rock on which he can rest his soul. The way of acceptance appears adequate to all his wants and desires, and worthy of the infinite wisdom and love which devised it. From the fullness of a believing and grateful heart he can say—"This is all my salvation and all my desire. My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour. Surely in the Lord Jesus have I righteousnes and strength. Thanks be unto God who giveth me the victory through my Lord Jesus Christ." Amen.

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SERMON CCXXXII.

By JOHN M'DOWELL, D. D.
Philadelphia.

JOSHUA'S RESOLUTION.

Joshua xxiv. 15. *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

This was the resolution of Joshua, the ruler of Israel. He was one of the multitude, who, under Moses their leader, had, by the strong hand of the Lord, been delivered from Egyptian bondage. He had spent forty years in the wilderness, on the journey from Egypt to Canaan; and was one of the only two of the whole multitude who were adults when they came out of Egypt, who were permitted to enter the promised land. On the death of Moses, he had succeeded by divine appointment, to the supreme authority in the nation. He had conducted the tribes of Israel, through Jordan, into Canaan; had led their armies to battle and to victory; and had put them in possession of the promised land.

The nation of Israel had now been in peaceable possession of the land of Canaan, several years; and Joshua had become old, and knew that according to the course of nature, the time of his death was near. Anxious with his latest life to glorify God, and promote the interests of the people, over whom he had presided, he gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and there addressed them.

In this address he briefly recited God's gracious dealings with them, beginning with the call of Abraham, and carrying them through their history, down to the time when he addressed them. He then applied his address, by exhorting them to fear and serve the Lord, who had thus

graciously dealt with them as a people. And he urged them to an immediate decision, whether they would serve the Lord or not. "Choose ye (said he) this day whom ye will serve." He then told them what his resolution was—a resolution which he had doubtless formed many years before, and according to which he had, through a long life, acted. This resolution we have in our text—"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Whatever others might do, this was his resolution.

This was a most noble and blessed resolution. And O, that every individual in this assembly would make it for himself! And that every head of a family would make it in behalf of his family! We should then be, indeed, a blessed congregation.

In speaking from the text, I will—

I. Explain the resolution,

II. Offer reasons to enforce it.

I. I would explain the resolution—"As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The resolution, you perceive, is two-fold. Joshua resolved that he himself, personally, would serve the Lord; and then that his family also should serve him. The amount of his resolution was, that he would maintain both personal and family religion. It will be proper to consider each of these branches of the resolution separately.

(1.) Consider it in regard to personal religion. "As for me I will serve the Lord." What is it truly to serve the Lord? I answer—

1. If we would personally serve the Lord, we must become *reconciled* to him. Mankind, in their natural state, are alienated from God. They do not approve of his character, law, government, and plan of salvation. On the contrary, they dislike them, and are opposed to them. As we read Rom. ix. 7: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Hence, if we would truly serve the Lord, it is evident, we must become reconciled to him. This native enmity, and opposition, and dislike, must be given up; and the contrary feelings towards God must be exercised and cherished in our souls. He searches the heart and requires the heart in all our services, and common sense teaches that we cannot acceptably serve him, unless our hearts are right with him, unless they become reconciled to him, which they are not, in their natural state. And agreeably to this we are often exhorted in the Scriptures to "be reconciled to God;" the ministry of the gospel is called "the ministry of reconciliation;" the great business of ministers is sometimes summed up, in instrumentally reconciling sinners to God; and God's people, of whom it is said,

that they were sometimes alienated, and enemies in their mind by wicked works, are described as reconciled to God. This is the commencement of religion in their souls. Hence, my hearers, if you would truly serve the Lord, you must first become reconciled to him—to his character, law, government, and plan of salvation, so as to approve of them.

2. If we would personally form the resolution in the text—"As for me—I will serve the Lord;" and practically execute it, we must *repent* of our sins. We must be sensible that we are sinners; feel that sin is an evil thing; condemn ourselves for it; be sorry for it, and mourn over it; and forsake our sins with hatred of them, and turn from them to God. Such repentance is essential to the real service of God. This the nature of things teaches; for if we have been in a state of alienation from God, and rebellion against him, it is not possible, that we can heartily engage in his service and pursue in our feelings and conduct a directly opposite course, without condemning our former feelings and conduct, and exercising sorrow for them; or repenting of our sins. And that repentance is essential to the service of God is explicitly taught in his word, where sinners are often exhorted to repent; and remission is connected with repentance; and God commands all men every where to repent; and it is declared "except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish."

3. The personal service of the Lord includes *faith* in the Lord Jesus Christ. "This," said our Savior when he was upon earth—"this is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent." "Without faith it is impossible to please him"—"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." There is no acceptable return to God whom we have offended, but through Christ as mediator—Christ is the way; "no man cometh to the Father but by him." It is through his righteousness alone that we can obtain the forgiveness of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons and services. And it is by faith alone that we can obtain an interest in this righteousness. This faith in Christ, which makes a part of the acceptable service of God, implies a conviction of sin and ruin, and utter helplessness. Under this conviction the person exercising true faith, believes that Christ alone can save him, and that he is able and willing to do for him what he needs; and renouncing every other dependence, and approving of the plan of salvation through Christ, he cordially receives him as he is offered in the gospel, for the pardon of his sins, and the acceptance of his person and services, in the sight of God. This is a very important

and fundamental article, in all true and acceptable service of the Lord. It doubtless made a part of Joshua's service. For religion was substantially the same under the Old Testament dispensation, as it is under the New. The saints of that period, through prophecies, and promises, and types, were led to believe in a Savior to come, and relied on his merits for pardon, and the acceptance of their persons and services. By faith Abel offered an acceptable sacrifice. Noah was heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Abraham saw Christ's day and rejoiced; he believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness. And in Habakkuk we read—"the just shall live by faith." Faith was doubtless a part of Joshua's service; and it is still an essential part of all acceptable service of the Lord.

4. Another essential part of the service of the Lord is *love* to him. This reason teaches; for even men, if they could know the heart, would not approve of professions of service, where love was wanting: and much less will the heart searching God whom we are under infinite obligations to love. Besides, God, in his word, repeatedly and explicitly requires that we should love him. God demands, "My son, give me thine heart." "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." He teaches us that the faith which is acceptable "works by love;" and that "love is the fulfilling of the law." And he has made many promises to those who love him; and has denounced threatenings against those who do not. Love to God then, is essential to the true service of him. This love to be genuine and acceptable, must be supreme. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind." And our Savior says, "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me." And again, he says, "If any man come to me, and hate not (that is comparatively) his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."

5. In the service of the Lord is included *obedience* to all his commandments. And indeed this is the main and great point, and is emphatically the service itself. The other things we have considered relate to a right state of mind. This is the conduct proceeding from such a state of mind. Obedience is the necessary fruit of genuine reconciliation to God, repentance, faith, and love. If we are reconciled to God, so as to approve of his law, and delight in it, this approbation and delight will lead to uniform obedience. If we repent of our sins, in genuine re-

pentance is included turning unto God, or obedience; it is breaking off our sins by righteousness, or obedience. If we believe in Christ, while we depend on him alone for the acceptance of our services, we shall be "careful to maintain good works;" for "Christ is not the minister of sin." He is called Jesus because "He saves his people from their sins;" "he gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works"—and "faith without works is dead." It is not genuine. And if we truly love God, this love will constrain us to cheerful obedience. Obedience necessarily results from the state of mind, which has been shown to belong to the servants of God. And it is implied in the very word, *serve*, in our text. For what is service to any one but obedience to his directions or commands? Besides, the Lord in his word, tells us that "he that *doeth* righteousness is righteous;"—that "they who *do* his will, shall enter into his kingdom;"—and that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

This obedience to be genuine must be *sincere*, must flow from the heart, and be performed from love to God, and with a single eye to his glory, as the ultimate end. It must be *universal*, extending to all the commandments of God. The real servant of God does not select this and that command; and resolve that he will observe them, while he excuses himself from others more self-denying and difficult; but the language of his heart is that of the Israelites when they covenanted with the Lord at Sinai—"*All* that the Lord hath spoken we will do." While he comes short of perfect obedience to any of God's commandments, and mourns over his imperfections; he sincerely endeavors to obey the whole. And his obedience is not a mere transitory thing; but he endeavors *habitually*, in all circumstances, to render it; and he *perseveres* in it through life.

The commandments of the Lord are contained in his word. This the servant of the Lord reads and searches, to know what is the will of the heavenly Master he has resolved to serve. And agreeably to his will made known in his word, he worships him in all the ordinances of his appointment—in the closet, the family and the sanctuary; he endeavors to promote his kingdom and glory in the world; he renders to all their due: and is merciful to those who need his pity; and he governs and keeps under his own passions, denying himself what God forbids; and cherishing and exercising habitually the graces of the Spirit. In short, he endeavors to walk in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. Whether these commandments relate to the duties he

owes immediately to his God, to his fellow men in the several relations of life, or to himself.

6. Once more under this head, I remark, that, fully to do our duty in serving the Lord, we must publicly avow before the world that we are his servants, and acknowledge him to be our Master. Or in other words, it is our duty to make a profession of religion, by coming to the ordinance which Christ has instituted to be the public badge of discipleship—I mean the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. This duty is taught by the command of Christ, "Do this in remembrance of me"—This is expressed as imperatively as any other duty taught in the Bible—and as we have seen that the servant of the Lord has respect to all his commandments, he will of course have respect to this as well as others. And there are reasons which make this command peculiarly binding. But, I proceed—

(2.) To consider the other branch of the resolution.—This relates to *family religion*. Joshua resolved not only that *he* would serve the Lord; but also that his *family* should serve him. "As for me, and *my house*, we will serve the Lord." A similar resolution ought every head of a family to form and execute, in regard to his house. What is the import of this resolution, "As for—my house, we will serve the Lord." Joshua must have meant that he was resolved to maintain family religion; that the members of his family should unite with him, externally at least, in the service of the Lord; and that he would do his duty towards them, in endeavoring to bring them heartily and truly to engage in this service. And this is the import of this part of the resolution. Daily, morning and evening, the head of a family ought to collect *all* his household together, and lead them in worship at the throne of grace, acknowledging their dependence on God, as a family, and as individuals, confessing their sins, thanking him for his mercies, and asking for needed blessings on themselves and others. This family prayer ought to be accompanied with the daily reading of the word of God; and singing his praises may also very properly be added.

Again, if we would make the resolution in our text, that our house should serve the Lord, and faithfully execute it, it becomes us to *instruct* those under our care, in the things of religion. We ought to lead them into a knowledge of the character of God, the relations they sustain to him, and their obligations to serve him; their sinfulness and guilt, and just exposure to the divine wrath; the way of salvation through Jesus Christ; and the nature and necessity of a new heart, faith in Christ, repentance, love and obedience. These and other great truths of revealed

religion, they who would have their house serve the Lord, must often speak of to the members of their families, and inculcate upon their practical attention. And they ought to use their counsel, their influence, and when necessary, what authority they may possess, to bring them according to their age, and circumstances, under the instruction of others, as in the Sabbath School, the Bible class and the public Sanctuary.

Again, the resolution in the text that our house shall serve the Lord, makes it the duty of heads of families, who would faithfully execute the resolution, to *restrain* their children, and other members of their families, from such company, and places, and practices, as may be dangerous to their religious interests. This they should do by guarding them against the danger; and when they see them running into danger, by reproof—and when these fail to produce the desired effect to keep them from evil associations and practices, heads of families, should exercise what authority they possess, according to the relation they sustain to the respective members of their families, to restrain them. The neglect of duty in this respect, is one great reason why our streets are filled, and especially on the Sabbath, with so many youth, who are ruining themselves and one another, and are growing up to be curses to their parents and friends, pests of society, and eventually to people the world of wo.

Further, in the resolution of our text in regard to our households, is included the duty of setting before them a good *example*. Example has a powerful influence, especially on the young. Good example itself is a powerful means of grace, and has often been blessed of God to the saving good of those who have been favored with its influence; and it is calculated to give effect to the instructions, counsels, restraints, and authority of heads of families; while, if heads of families are not careful in their example before their children and domestics, the other means they use with them for their spiritual good, will have little or no effect.

Once more, if heads of families would perform the duty, included in the resolution, that their house shall serve the Lord, it becomes them to pray for their families, not only with them, but in their secret devotions. We cannot give our families grace—we cannot bring them heartily and practically to resolve for themselves, that they will serve the Lord.—We can only use the means, which God hath appointed.—He must give the increase. This we ought to feel; and under a sense of dependence, often look to God for grace to be faithful in the discharge of duty to our families; and for his blessing to attend our efforts for their

good, and that he would effectually incline their hearts to engage truly in his service.

Thus Joshua doubtless acted in regard to his family.—He doubtless maintained the worship of God in his house, and required the attendance of his family; he instructed them in the things of religion, and brought them under the public means of God's appointment: he restrained them from dangerous associations and practices; he enforced the other means he used with them, by his example, and he looked up to God in prayer for his blessing upon his efforts—and thus it is the obvious duty of every head of a family to act.

SERMON CCXXXIII.

JOSHUA XXIV. 15. *As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*

MY object in this discourse will be to offer reasons to enforce the duty of serving the Lord *ourselves*, and with our *families*. And in doing this it will be proper to present the reasons enforcing each branch of the duty separately. And—

I. As it regards *personal religion*. Why should each one of you, my hearers, who have not already done it, make and execute the resolution, "As for me I will serve the Lord?" I answer—

1. This service is *reasonable*. This appears from the supreme excellence of God, and from the relations we sustain to him. God is a being of infinite excellence. He possesses every possible perfection, in the highest possible degree. He is from everlasting to everlasting, every where present, omniscient, infinite in wisdom, almighty in power, spotless in purity, inflexibly just, unchangeably true, and love itself. All his attributes are summed up in this one short sentence, "*God is love*"—and his law and governments are like himself, infinitely perfect. Is it not reasonable that such a God should be served by all his intelligent creatures, and therefore by each of us? Consider what this ser-

vice is, as it has been described in the preceding discourse; then consult unbiassed reason, and say, ought not this God to be served? The commencement of the service he requires is, that you should be reconciled to him; and ought you not to be reconciled to such a Being? ought you not to approve of such an infinitely excellent character, and of the government, and laws of such a Being? In his service is included repentance of sin. And must not sin which is opposed to such a Being, which is rebellion against his government, and a transgression of his righteous laws, be wrong? And if wrong, ought we not to repent of it? Another part of this service, as we have seen, is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ for the pardon of our sins, and the acceptance of our persons and services. This is God's plan for saving sinners of our race; and from the perfection of his character we ought to conclude his plan to be wise, and righteous, and therefore we ought to return to him in this way. It is a plan which illustrates and glorifies his perfections, and magnifies and honors his law: and therefore it is reasonable that we should practically approve of it. It is reasonable that we should believe what a God of perfect truth has revealed; and since he has been pleased to open a way of mercy, for sinners who justly deserved his eternal wrath, without an offer of mercy on any terms, it is reasonable that we should return to him through the Mediator he has provided, and revealed, relying on his merits for the pardon of our sins and the acceptance of our persons and services.

Another part of this service is supreme love to him. And if God be infinitely excellent, I appeal to the reason of every person, if he ought not to be supremely esteemed and loved. Again, his government, from the very perfection of his nature, must be wise and righteous and benevolent; and the same must be the character of his laws; and if so, his government surely ought to be cheerfully submitted to, and his laws obeyed. Thus the excellence of the divine character shows the reasonableness of this service. If God be infinitely excellent, it is unquestionably reasonable that he should be served by us; or as this service has been explained, that we should be reconciled to him, repent of our sins against him, receive and rely upon the Mediator he has appointed for our pardon and acceptance, love him supremely, and obey all his commandments; and if this is reasonable, it is equally reasonable that we should acknowledge before the world, that we do thus serve and honor him.

The reasonableness of this service will further appear, and must commend itself to the judgment and conscience of every enlightened

and unprejudiced person, if we consider the relations which God sustains to us. He is our Creator, we derived from him our being and all the powers and faculties we possess; and he made us for himself, for his own glory. He has therefore an absolute property in us; and has an unquestionable right to demand our service as he has done: and it is infinitely reasonable that we should render it. He is also our Preserver. In him we live, and move, and have our being. He sustains the being which he at first gave us; and we could no more sustain ourselves in being, than we could at first give it. For every breath we draw, we are dependent on God; and if so, I appeal to every person, if it is not reasonable that we should serve him. God is also our Benefactor. All our temporal comforts have come originally from him. Every good and perfect gift cometh down from him, the Father of lights—Second causes or means, have been instrumental in producing these good things; but God is the great first cause, without whom these means would have proved unavailing. Consider then your temporal blessings, and see how good the Lord has been to you; and while you consider your blessings, keep in mind that they have been conferred upon you by the Lord, while you were sinning against him, and provoking his displeasure. You have received blessings from the Lord, yearly, monthly, daily, and continually. You have received numerous blessings from him, in infancy, in childhood, in youth, in manhood, and in declining age. You have received many blessings at his hands, as individuals, as families, and as members of a civil community. Were your parents preserved to take care of you, in your infancy and childhood? The Lord preserved them. When you have been sick, the Lord has blessed the means, and healed your sicknesses. To the Lord you are indebted for food and raiment, and prosperity in business; and to his kind providence you owe your civil liberty, and all your other numerous temporal blessings. Do not these numerous blessings which you have received, and are continually receiving, lay you under great and indispensable obligations to serve the Lord?

The Lord also sustains to you the relation of Redeemer. Our race had ruined themselves by sin. Mankind had universally rebelled against God, and transgressed his laws, and had thus incurred the sentence of condemnation—eternal death. They had also lost his image, and become altogether depraved, and unfit for the enjoyment of holy happiness. In this condition, when they all deserved to be forever banished from his presence, and made miserable, he was pleased in infinite mercy to

provide salvation for them. At an infinite price he opened for them a way of redemption from sin and ruin. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." In this ruin were we, and for us was this redemption provided. To provide it, the infinite Son of God became incarnate, was made under the law, perfectly fulfilled it, and after having passed through a life of deep humiliation, privation, and sufferings, laid down his life, under agonies undescribable, an offering to make atonement for sin, and to ransom the souls of ruined sinners. My hearers, can you contemplate the love of God in Christ, and not admit that you are under infinite obligations to serve him? Can you look at the humiliation and sufferings of Christ to open a way of salvation for you, and yet withhold your hearts from him? yet refuse practically to take up the resolution in the text, "As for me I will serve the Lord?" Surely that heart must be hard indeed, that can thus refuse. I appeal to every individual in this assembly, is it not reasonable,—and infinitely reasonable, that you should be grateful to him who has done so much for you? and that you should give your hearts to him, who gave his heart's blood for you, and to whose love, and sufferings you are entirely indebted, that you are now out of hell, and are prisoners of hope, and enjoy the bounties of God's providence? In view of what Christ has done and suffered to purchase salvation, I appeal to every person, if it is not a reasonable and indispensable duty to take up and execute the resolution of the text, "As for me, I will serve the Lord"—

This salvation, thus expensively provided, God has, in distinguishing mercy, revealed and offered to you. And herein he has highly distinguished you above far the greater part of our world, who are left in Pagan darkness. He has given you his revealed word, a preached gospel, Sabbaths, and sanctuaries, and numerous means of grace. And in regard to means and privileges, the Lord has exalted you, not only above the heathen, but also above the greater part of Christendom. Surely, my hearers, the great and distinguishing goodness of God to you, in a spiritual respect, imposes great, and indispensable, and peculiar obligations on you, to serve him. The service of God is a reasonable service. He is infinitely excellent, and therefore worthy of your service; and he is your Creator, preserver, benefactor, and redeemer; and therefore you are under immeasurable obligations to serve him. Let the reasonableness of the duty then operate upon every one of you and influence you to make and execute the resolution in the text—"As for me, I will serve the Lord."

2. Another argument I would present to enforce the duty is—this service is *honorable.* I know a different opinion has extensively prevailed in the world, and at this day prevails in the minds of many. Many feel that it would be degrading to them to become the humble servants of God; and especially to acknowledge him before the world. They are ashamed of the cross of Christ. But such are ashamed of what would really be their highest honor, and their greatest glory. Permit me to reason on this point a little. Is it not really honorable to do what is right, and dishonorable to do that which is wrong? Every rational being who feels right must answer in the affirmative. And if any answer otherwise, it must be because their hearts are depraved, and their minds perverted, and they themselves morally degraded. To decide the real course of honor then, we must decide the course of right. And is it not right to serve the Lord? This must be settled, by what has already been said, on the reasonableness of the duty. And if it is right, it is honorable, and the contrary is really dishonorable and degrading.

Further, is it not considered honorable among men to be connected with the great ones of the earth? to be placed in high offices, to possess riches, and to be heir to large estates, and have the fair prospect of increasing wealth and power? Now the servant of God, is at the same time a child of the King of kings; he is constituted by his heavenly Father a king and priest. He is rich, for he has now such a property in every thing as is best calculated to promote his happiness. "All things"—says the apostle addressing Christians—"all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours." And they are heirs, and have a sure title to an inheritance, and to honors, far superior to any which this world can give. Surely it is highly honorable, and really the highest glory we can attain to in this world, to be a servant of God. And such has it been esteemed by some of the greatest men, as to intellect, knowledge, wealth, power and influence, in the several ages and countries in which they lived.

3. Another reason I would offer to enforce the duty is, this service is *profitable.* It is profitable in this world, in death, and in the world to come. In keeping the commandments of the Lord, there is great reward. There is more happiness to be found in this world in serving God, than in neglecting his service. This is the testimony of God in his word; where we read—"wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness; and all her paths are peace," and, "godliness is profitable unto

all things; having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." And this testimony of the word of God is confirmed by Christian experience. Every real servant of God will testify that there is more happiness to be found in the service of the Lord, than in the service of sin. And their testimony ought to have weight; for they have tried both; and are best qualified from experience to form a correct judgment.

They who serve the Lord have their sins all pardoned, they are delivered from condemnation, God is reconciled to them, and is their friend and Father. They are entitled to peace of mind—a peace which Jesus gives, and which the world can neither give nor take away; to joy in the Holy Ghost; to hope of glory; to an interest in the numerous and exceedingly great and precious promises of the word of God; to delight in the divine ordinances; to support under afflictions; and to communion with God. These blessings all the servants of God, in a greater or less degree, experience in this world; and they afford present happiness altogether superior to what the things of the world can give.

And when we come to die, which will be most profitable then,—religion, or the world and sin? There can be no hesitation as to the answer. Religion has supported and comforted multitudes on the bed of death, and made them tranquil and even joyful; while multitudes destitute of it have then been filled with sorrow and remorse, and have died with dreadful forebodings of the future. Multitudes have deeply regretted when they came to die, that they had neglected the service of God; but the world is challenged to produce an instance where a person when he came to die, regretted that he had chosen the service of the Lord, or that he chose it too early. Brethren, we must all die, and it is a solemn business to die; and we shall then especially need something to support and comfort us; and this event is at farthest, near; and it may be very near. Is it not wise then, heartily to engage in the service of God, that you may have the supports and comforts of religion in the solemn hour of death, to which you must all soon come?

But there is also another state of existence—there is another world to which we are all bound, and where we shall all shortly be; and our condition there will be happy or miserable, according as we have here served God, or served him not. They who truly serve God here, shall there receive a glorious reward. They shall be admitted into heaven. There they shall be in perfect holliness and hapiness; receive a king-

dom which cannot be removed; wear a crown of an exceeding and eternal weight of glory; possess an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; be associated with holy angels, and with the spirits of the just made perfect; have fullness of joy; be admitted to the vision and fruition of God: and all this happiness will be without alloy, without intermission, and without end. By all these benefits of religion in this world, in death, and in the world to come, you are urged, my hearers, to make and execute the resolution of the text, "As for me—I will serve the Lord." Would you have the highest happiness of which you are capable in this world—would you die in peace—and would you be unspeakably and forever happy in heaven? Then heartily engage in the service of God.

4. I mention one other motive to urge personal religion, and that is the *necessity* of the case. You must serve the Lord, or you must be forever miserable. God made all things and therefore man for himself—for his own glory. And he will be glorified in his creature man. Those who will not actively glorify him by serving him, he will cause to glorify his justice and his power in their everlasting punishment. They who will not serve him must continue under the curse of his law while they live; death will be their enemy, when they come to die; and when they leave this world, which may be very soon, they must lie down in sorrow, where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched; where are continual weeping and wailing; and where there is no rest, day nor night forever. By all the terrors of the Lord, then, and the dreadfulness of his wrath against his enemies, you are urged to engage in his service.

II. I proceed to offer some reasons to enforce the other branch of the resolution; viz. in regard to *family religion*—"As for my house we will serve the Lord." Having already occupied so much time in offering reasons to enforce personal religion, I must necessarily be brief on this part of the subject. And indeed if I could succeed in inducing my hearers heartily to embrace personal religion, family religion would follow of course. True personal religion in heads of families will lead them conscientiously to perform their duties to their families.

Family religion is enforced by its reasonableness. We are dependent on God as families, as well as individuals. As families we should therefore acknowledge him. We need family blessings, and therefore as families, we should ask for them. And as families we are the subjects of many favors, and therefore as such we should express our thankfulness.

Family religion is also enforced by scripture precepts. Family prayer appears to be inculcated in several passages, as the following. Peter exhorting husbands and wives as to their relative duties, adds as a reason, "that your prayers be not hindered;" which appears to teach that they are to pray together. Paul in his epistle to the Colossians, after having pointed out the relative duties of the different members of a family, adds the exhortation, which appears to be addressed to them collectively.—"Continue in prayer." And in other epistles he exhorts, "that men should pray every where," and "with all prayer," which general expressions naturally include family prayer.

As to the other branches of family religion, which were pointed out, —as the religious instruction of those under our care, restraining them from vicious associates and practices, setting a good example before them, and praying for them in our secret devotions—these are enforced by numerous passages of Scripture, which we have not time to quote.

Family religion in its several branches is also enforced by the example of a host of worthies, whose history is recorded in the Scriptures. Besides the example of Joshua, we have that of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Job, and David, and Daniel, and Cornelius; and we may add we have the example of Christ.

Again this duty is enforced by its advantages to ourselves, to our families, to the church of God, and to the civil community. That family religion is calculated to be thus advantageous must be evident from its very nature; and facts abundantly teach its advantages in all the relations which have been mentioned.

And once more I would say, family religion is most solemnly enforced by that awful imprecation which is recorded, Jer. x. 25, "Pour out thy fury upon the families that call not upon thy name."

Thus I have offered reasons to enforce the resolution in the text, as it regards both personal and family religion. As it regards the former or that we should each personally for himself serve the Lord—it is reasonable because God is infinitely excellent and worthy of our service, and because he sustains to us relations which lay us under indispensable obligations to serve him. He is our Creator, preserver, benefactor and Redeemer. His service is honorable. It is profitable in this world, in death, and in the world to come. And it is necessary. We must serve him, or be forever unspeakably miserable.

And as it regards the latter, that we should serve the Lord, in and with our families, it has been shown that it is reasonable, that it is en-

forced by Scripture precept and example, that it is peculiarly advantageous, and that we are in danger of the curse of God resting on us and our families, if we do not.

And now brethren, what is your conclusion in view of the duty which has been explained, and the reasons by which it has been enforced? Will you not heartily and practically, make the resolution, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord?" Will not each of you make the resolution for yourself, that you will personally serve the Lord? And if you heartily make this resolution, those of you who are heads of families will easily be induced to make the other. I am satisfied brethren, that your judgment and conscience are on the Lord's side, whose cause I have been endeavoring to plead with you. Oh that he would incline your hearts to make the resolution, that, let others do as they may, "As for me—I will serve the Lord!"

And dear brethren, let me urge upon you that you heartily make the resolution *now*. Most and probably all of you intend to make it at some future time, and why not now? All the arguments which have been used to enforce the duty of practically resolving to serve the Lord, apply to the present time, and enforce an immediate decision. Is it reasonable? it is reasonable now. For God is now infinitely excellent, and for this reason as worthy of our service now, as he ever will be. And he is now our Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor; and Christ has already died to open a way of salvation for us. The service is honorable now. The same reasons that will ever make it so while you live, make it so now. It will be profitable now: for you will be strangers to the highest happiness of which you are capable until you truly engage in this service. And it is necessary now. God will be angry with you till you do, for he is "angry with the wicked every day." And while you are delaying you may grieve away the Spirit of God; and be left to hardness, and blindness, and final impenitence; or you may die, and thus the door be forever shut.—Besides, Joshua, when he told the Israelites what *his* resolution was, urged them to an *immediate* decision. "Choose ye," said he "this day whom ye will serve," andi elsewhere we read, "What thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might." "Boast not thyself of to-morrow." "Behold, now is the accepted time." "To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." May God add his blessing to his truth, and incline the hearts of all of you without delay, heartily to adopt the resolution of the text, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Amen.

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SERMON CCXXXIV.

By Rev. JOB F. HALSEY and AUSTIN DICKINSON.

THE REAL CHRISTIAN.

Rom. viii. 9. *If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*

It is a question of infinite moment—*How may professing Christians exhibit the spirit of Christ, and thus evince that they are really His?* A summary answer to this inquiry is, *By cordially imitating his example in efforts to save men and glorify God.* "He that saith, I know him;" that is, he who makes profession of the knowledge of Christ, "ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Indeed, his spirit cannot reign within us, without so assimilating our whole character and life to his, that it shall be clearly manifest whose children we are, and under whose authority we act. Let us then solemnly and faithfully examine ourselves in the light of Christ's example—remembering that "if our own hearts condemn us, God is greater, and knoweth all things;" and remembering, too, that if we are deceived, it is infinitely better to know it now, and repent, than to wake hereafter "to shame and everlasting contempt." Have you, then, the spirit of Christ? If you have,

I. *Your whole mind will, like his, be absorbed in doing the will of your heavenly Father.* "Wist ye not (said he) that I must be about my Father's business?" "I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." Of course he had nothing to do with merely consulting his own ease, pleasure, comfort, or honor.

"Christ pleased not himself;" but submitted to the heaviest self-denial and untiring effort, that the Father might be glorified and his law honored. To obey him and finish *his* work, he made every thing, even his life, bow. He "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." But suppose he had, like multitudes of his professed disciples, made his Father's will a *secondary*, and his own pleasure and temporal interest a *primary* object; when, O, when could he have said, "I have glorified *thee* on the earth, I have *finished* the work which *thou* gavest me to do?"

This work he well knew would cost him continued labor, deep humiliation, and even the sacrifice of life. But to all this he submitted voluntarily. Yea, it was his "*delight*" thus to do "the will of him that sent him."

Now, how seldom is it imagined, that to be a follower of Christ involves the same spirit of self-denial and devotedness to the interests of another? Yet thus it is written—"Whosoever he be, that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple." The moment one becomes a true disciple of Christ, he resigns his selfish spirit, and the will and work of God are first and habitually in his thoughts and aims. His anxious inquiry now is, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" and he daily and hourly consults the honor of his divine Master.

True, he will often find his present interest and comfort identified with his work; but very often his faithful discharge of duty will involve great sacrifice, and much self-denying labor. All of which, however, can be endured even "joyfully," through that faith which sustained prophets, apostles, martyrs, and millions now in glory, of whom the world was not worthy.

It is a most fatal mistake in multitudes professing piety,—that they think so much of present ease and mere worldly enjoyment—forgetting that, with respect to these, "he that taketh not up his *cross*, *daily*, and followeth *me*, (a condescending, *self-denying* Savior,) he cannot be my disciple." "To him that *overcometh*, will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." The joys of *conquest*, then, are the joys of Christians. And they are not to look for *present ease*, but for conflict, and victory, and *triumphant* joy. So it was with Christ: "He took upon him the form of a servant;" and, not for worldly gratification, but "*for the joy that was set before him*, (in honoring God and saving souls,) he endured the cross, despising the shame"—till he could say, with respect

to the service he had undertaken, "It is *finished.*" Oh, if ever a being had one ruling passion, that being was Jesus, and that passion, stronger than death, was the joy of doing the will of his Father in the salvation of men!

The sum and substance of true religion is supreme love to God and love to man. And if any soul love God supremely, will he not study to learn distinctly *his will*, with a view to habitual obedience? And if he love his perishing fellow man as himself, will he not do all in his power to save him? If millions are seen rising in rebellion against God, and trampling his law under foot, will he not be anxious for them, as well as for the honor of God? Can he be satisfied that they should insult that Being who is supremely excellent? Can he be indifferent to any means of reconciling them to their lawful Sovereign? If so, what is his profession of love to God and man but solemn mockery? What! see God insulted and rejected, and his favor lost by millions, and Christ leaving his throne to reconcile and save them, and yet a follower of Christ feel no deep sympathy, and manifest no burning zeal, and make no sacrifices for an object so dear to his Master! A follower of Christ! and yet, in the eye of all around, pursuing his own ends, his own will! No: the case is impossible. A real follower of Christ will be *known* as such, and "*read of all men.*" His character can no more be concealed, or fail to be admired, than a splendid city upon a mountain top. For what says the Savior himself?—"*Ye are the light of the world:*" "*a city set on an hill cannot be hid:*" "*ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.*" Surely, then, if the spirit of Christ be in you, your whole soul, like his, will be absorbed in doing the will of your heavenly Father—all your plans and movements will of course be in harmony with his example, who came to bring honor to God in the salvation of sinners.

II. If you have the spirit of Christ, *you will habitually feel and act out personal responsibility.* "Lo, *I* come to do thy will," said Christ. With him, doing *whatsoever was given him* to do, not doing *as others* did, was the principle of action. So entirely was he bent upon fulfilling personal obligation, that he shrunk from no duty, whether difficult or easy. He had found it more pleasant, we might suppose, to have continued to bask for ever in the beams of his Father's countenance, robed in the uncreated splendors of Godhead, receiving the joyous homage of unfallen millions, than to have "made himself of no reputation"—more convenient than to have worn a crown of thorns—much easier to

have let our world be lost forever, than to have hung upon the cross to save it. But no: while clad in the habiliments of shame, while wearing that thorny crown, and while agonizing in death on the cross, he could say, "*I* have finished the great redemption—it was *my* duty—the duty is done—and done by *me*. It is finished, and finished by *me*." What! Christ shrink from personal responsibility? No, verily; he came to do whatever *he*, not another, had to do. Hence we find him laboring while others were idle, just as readily as while others wrought; doing his Father's work, whether others did much, or little, or nothing, ridiculed or smiled, approved or disapproved, thanked or persecuted. While Satan buffeted, he wrought on; while angels strengthened him, he wrought on. When he had chosen, qualified, and sent into the field twelve laborers at one time, and at another seventy more, so far from resting because the work would now be done, or excusing himself because *others* were doing it, he travelled, he labored, he preached, he prayed unceasingly; as regardless of personal comfort or indulgence as ever. This, and only this, was the spirit he exhibited, until he could say, "Father, I have *finished* the work thou gavest *me* to do;" and died—doing, even in death, what he could not do while living. Thus, while he told others their duty, he did his own. While he reproved others for idleness, he omitted not a jot or tittle his Father had given him to do. He regarded this as his *personal* duty.

And the command of God has made *our* moral duty a *personal concern*. *I* am commanded to "love God with all my heart, and my neighbor as myself." If *I* do whatsoever Christ has commanded, I am his friend, though millions disobey him. But suppose the millions obey him; can I be his friend unless I obey him too? Or suppose my neighbor loves and obeys him with the devotion of Paul, or Brainerd, or Martyn; am I the less bound to love and obey him with *all my* strength?

When conscience can be loaned from breast to breast, then, and not till then, can my personal obligation, in reference to the conversion of the world, be discharged by another. When God's eye, which never slumbers, can be deceived, then, and not till then, can what I do for the glory of God be reckoned to you, and you stand applauded as the servant who has improved his talents.

But how many professors excuse themselves from giving, merely because some liberal spirit has given as he ought; and judge that he has given enough for himself and them too? How many say to themselves,

because some poor wealthy Nabal in the church, who should give his thousands, does not choose to do his duty, that therefore *they* ought to give only in proportion to his parsimony? How many parents think Sabbath School teachers do so much *more* than their duty, that the feeling of parental obligation to teach their own children may now in a measure cease? Because a few choice spirits are so incessantly active, prayerful, and self-denying, as to make their influence felt over a congregation or a town, therefore multitudes in the church think they have not to touch a wheel of benevolent effort, except to give their contribution, if perchance some agent visits the place, or some collector calls upon them! Call upon nine tenths of professing Christians to enlist their *personal* efforts in any good enterprise, and they will instinctively tell you, "*they* have no time, *they* are not the persons;" or very complacently name to you one or more of those Christ-like spirits who have learned to be *personally* "ready to every good work," and then feel as though themselves had done all that the cause of God and a dying race can justly require of them. Oh! when DEATH calls upon such professors, will they then point to others, and say, "*they* are always ready, but *we* have no time to die?" Or in the last judgment, will others answer for you? Ah! these few cannot then lend you their consciences; nor could their tears wash from your garments the blood of souls lost through your neglect of *personal obligation*—your want of the *spirit of Christ.*

III. If you have the spirit of Christ, *you will never postpone the performance of duty.* He never procrastinated from day to day. He was ever alive to *present* duty. To perform this he was all zeal—all promptness He emphatically "made haste and delayed not to keep all God's commandments." "I must work," said he, "the work of him that sent me, *while it is day.*" And, "how am I *straitened* till it be accomplished!" As if he had said, "I am in an agony to have it done, that through my obedience unto death the Father may be honored and his glory spread around the world."

The suggestion that he ever put off till the morrow, what of duty he could have done to-day, is blasphemy. What! Christ *neglect present duty? violate present obligation?* Instead of this, we find him "rising a great while before day," for secret prayer—and almost always on his feet, looking for opportunities to do good—sympathizing with the sick, and ministering to the necessitous on the spot; rendering to all their due; preaching *daily,* in the temple, in the synagogues, by the way-

side, at a well, market-place, dinner-table, on the hill-side, on the plain, in a boat, or any where that opportunity offered—to rich or to poor, to one or to thousands—"instant in season and out of season." In a word, so far from postponing present duty to a more convenient season, he was so zealous to make the most of present time, that his own relatives said, "*he was beside himself.*"

Now pause and reflect, that this description of Christ's manner of life and teaching is strictly true. And is any one *ashamed* of such an example, and unwilling to follow it? "Of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed."

This feature of the spirit of Christ, *that he never postponed present duty*, must prevail, or the millennium can never come. If duty can be postponed one moment without guilt, it may be another, and another, till life is gone. The neglect of duty *for one moment*, is direct rebellion. Sin is not measured by time or space, but by the rule of right: and what is contrary to right this moment, is as certainly sin, as that which is contrary to right any number of moments, or an age. Again; what right has any one to presume on a future time, which God has not given him?—to promise what is not his own? Indeed if any duty does not involve *present obligation*, then the inclination of the subject, his will, not God's, becomes the source of duty; i. e. he may obey *when he chooses!* Though God says "*now*," he may say "*to-morrow*," or "when it *suits me*." Thus God must wait upon the creature—the subject be superior to his Sovereign! Yet how many, *even in the church*, exhibit this very spirit, and seem to consider all obligation *optional as to time*; live in habitual opposition to the spirit of Christ—in direct rebellion! Has not God commanded us to "love our neighbor *as* ourselves"—to send the gospel to *every creature?* And yet while Zion has been *postponing* this duty, who can number the millions that have gone down to everlasting night? How many millions more shall thus die eternally through our neglect, God only knows. Oh, brother! you must do *what you can* for dying men *now;* for their *want* is *present*, and *to-morrow* they may be in *eternity;* or *your* grave may open to receive you.

But you say, "I have no money." "*Sell that thou hast and give alms.*" "I have nothing to sell." "*Labor with thy hands, that thou mayest have to give.*" "I cannot labor." Then plead their cause with God and man, as you would plead for the life of your own soul. And

remember, what you now can do, must be done *to-day*. To-morrow will bring duties of its own.

We do not ask you to reflect upon the glorious results to Zion and a dying race, if every professor in Christendom fully did his work, day by day; but will *you* do thus?—will you now exhibit the spirit of Christ, *who never omitted present duty?* or will you, because others do, postpone your duty, the spirit of Christ notwithstanding, and yet call yourself a follower of Christ? "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Indeed this antichristian spirit of postponing present obligation, constitutes, we had almost said, the only sin of the world; and shall he be called a *Christian*, who is thus habitually guilty?

Before silencing conscience with the determination to do at a future period of life, or *by will*, what you might do now, first consider, Will that be obeying the injunction to "*do with your might what your hands now find to do?*" And consider, again, that millions of sinners now alive, will next year, be forever beyond the reach of charity. Place your soul in their souls' stead, and then "*do to them, as ye would that they should do to you.*"

In the sentiments now exhibited, we have the very elements of the *spirit of Christ*, the prevalence of which would cause the millennium to burst in all its glory upon the world. Let each Christian fix his soul steadfastly on that one great object, *the honor of God in the salvation of the lost*, and account it as a duty laid on *himself* to pursue according to his *ability*—as a duty of the *present hour;*—then each Christian would act, and act *now*—each would do, and do all he could *now*—give, and give all he could *now*. Each parent would *personally* labor and pray for the immediate conversion of his child, and commence the work *now*. Each Sabbath School teacher would personally aim at the salvation of his class, and aim at it *now*. Each Temperance friend, not content with mere membership, would personally become a generous, active spirit in the cause, and become one *now*. Each lover of the Tract, or Bible, or Education, or Missionary cause, regardless who smiled or frowned, would become a *personal*, living, volunteer agent, to do what he could *now*. Each Christian would *now* personally fulfil that commission, "Let him that heareth say come," unto every sinner whom he sees walking with rebel step under the "abiding wrath of God." No host of agents need then be called off from their own more proper field, to awaken and constrain others to do their duty. No:

rather, each would become a cheerful giver, and like Israel, "bring the Lord's offering;" or if too old, send it; or if too poor, be instant to bestow his prayers and blessing. No pastor would then wait at his ease, for an agent to come and enroll his flock under the Temperance banner; or for some Gordon Hall, to plead for benighted millions till he could plead no more—sending his last and loudest appeal from the tomb; or some Ward, to recount the human victims burning upon heathen altars; or some Boanerges, to rouse pastor and people to pray and labor for a revival. No: both pastor and people, like their heavenly Master, would then labor, and give, and pray, "with all their might," and pray, and give, and labor *now*, even "*to-day*, while it is called to-day." Then, too, our Newspapers, Journals, and Magazines, instead of wasting moral power in arraying one Christian party against another, and detailing their conflicts, would be angels of light, to carry the summons to present duty round the land, and from nation to nation. Oh then, for once, would the blessed Master behold with joy each and all of every Christian name, animated by one spirit, bending together at his work; each and all prayerfully, yet confidently, expecting his present blessing on their efforts. Would he, could he withhold his blessing from those thus laboring together with him, and doing *his will*? Oh no, he is too good and too near—"Lo I am with you always." Then would the people stimulate the ministry, and the ministry the people, and the Holy Ghost descend upon both. Then Bible truth would cut and pierce, like lightning, the consciences of sinners. Truth would live, and move, and have its being in the life and actions of its professors, as if Christ lived, and spake, and worked in and through them. Zion's men would be like Issachar, "who had an understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do"—Men like Zebulon, "that went forth to battle, expert in war, who could keep rank, and were not of double heart." "One should chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight." Yea, "he that is feeble among them would be as David, and the house of David as the Angel of God."

Let only this principle of *present and personal responsibility*, become fixed and living in the soul of a professor, and he will need no one to tell him, *how to do good—how to glorify God—how he can be instrumental in converting sinners to God.* He will not only know what to do, but be now and ever at the work. Each verse in his Bible will have a trumpet tongue to rouse him to action. Such a spirit will be all ear to catch the least hint of duty, all head to contrive, and

all hand to execute. He will tread in the very foot-marks of Christ. He will do what he now knows, and know much more by doing. Yes; whoever breathes the *spirit of Christ*, will not only evince that the conversion of the world is his ruling passion, but that the reign of such a spirit in his soul gives new intellectual vigor—*a sacred aptness to devise*, and a holy energy to execute plans for the salvation of his race. His judgment will be ripened, the powers of intellect concentrated, and his moral feelings acquire a mighty augmentation of courage and strength for holy enterprise.

The spirit of Christ will lead him to discover his duty in every *relation his Master bears*. Thus, was Christ the "*Friend of sinners?*"—did he lay down his life for them?—and can I withhold my example, prayers, or conversation, to lead sinners to their Friend? "*Heir of all things?*"—and can I, Ananias like, keep back any portion he has loaned me? "*Light of the world?*"—and can I, by covetousness or sloth, keep that light from gladdening the nations? "*The only Mediator?*"—and I not anxious to make known to others the eternal benefits of his mediation? "*Merciful?*"—and shall I grudge money, time, or effort, to show the same spirit? "*Morning Star?*"—and I not ardently long to have it usher in the "glorious day?" "*Teacher from God?*"—and shall I withhold his instructions from ignorant millions? "*Physician?*"—and I not sympathize with him in the maladies of a dying world? "*Rose of Sharon?*"—and I not desire to see "the wide wilderness blossom?" "*A Sacrifice?*"—and I grudge any thing I possess, that through this one offering heathen altars may be abolished forever? Christ my "*all-sufficient Sacrifice!*"—and I hesitate to give up ease, time, property, for his glory; and yet call myself a *follower of Christ?* "*Surety?*"—and yet I hoard up, while the world is starving? Not trust him, and yet expect him to trust my religion? "*Harmless?*"—and is this the uniform tendency of my example? Can I cherish a worldly spirit, and yet, like Him, be harmless? Can I oppose, or even refuse to countenance, any good cause, and yet do no harm?

Before we dismiss this subject, a few practical errors in the church, which most fearfully clog her chariot wheels, demand special consideration.

First: *That a Christian is only to act when acted upon*, and may wait until moved and set to work. Hence, thousands never give or do for Christ and the salvation of a world, unless urged and entreated, if

not even shamed by the doing and giving of others. They never seem to think it a duty or privilege, to be constantly seeking what more they can do, and even creating opportunities of doing, and stimulating others to do what they can for God's glory. Hence every wheel of benevolent enterprise stops among them, when a devoted pastor or some Caleb is removed by death. These mere machines have no one to set them in motion. They seem not to dream that responsibility lies between them and God. How different the spirit of Christ! "He *went about* doing good"—not because exhorted, but even when opposed—not because he *must*, but because "it was his meat, and drink, his delight." Real religion is like "leaven, or light, or salt, or fire;" whose essential nature is influential, active, effective. Each Christ-like professor, wherever placed, becomes a *leavening particle*—a *radiating point*. Indeed, if God had placed but one Christ-like spirit in a nation, he had made provision for christianizing the world.

SECOND ERROR. *Many judge erroneously respecting glorifying God.* With them it is but to join the church—attend upon the ordinances—have their children baptized—do a little to build up their own sect or party—live about like their neighbors—"add field to field and house to house"—and call it *providing for their own households!* They have no objection to some of the benevolent institutions, and will give a trifle, if the object and the agent pleases, or the calls are not too frequent. Now could we even allow that such may be Christians, still they are not *fruitful*, and of consequence do not *glorify God*. Does a tree that bears a little solitary fruit, glorify either the field or its owner? Or a clock that is right once a month, its maker? Or a servant who only does some trifle occasionally, his master? Or a field which returns only the seed sown, the farmer? Listen to the judgment of Christ. "Herein," as if he had said, *in no other way*, "herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear *much fruit; so* shall ye be my disciples." O, when will the millions on earth, even *hear* that God has a Son to be honored, should each in Christendom do like such professors? With the Bible in our hands, dare we encourage such to think they have *the spirit of Christ*? If not, "they are none of his." They may indeed think they are, and seem on the road to heaven; "but there is a way that seemeth right to a man, the end of which is death." A man may *sincerely* mistake poison for food, and die the victim of his sincerity.

THIRD ERROR. *That distance alters the nature of Christian duty,* or that Christians may live by sight. There are but few professors who

would not do tenfold more for the heathen, if they *saw* the funeral fires of India—if they *heard* the wail of her orphan children—if they actually *witnessed* the cruelties, obscenities, and blasphemies attendant on Pagan worship! But, Christian brother, *why* would you then do more? Would you do more than you could? "No; but I would do *all* I could." Well, Christ commands you to do that *now*. And remember, your duty is not to be measured by your *feelings*, but by *his commands*, and your *ability*. If you cannot reach a drowning man, may you refuse him the rope you hold in your hand? In the Bible and the benevolent institutions of the age, you virtually hold the means, under God, of saving a drowning heathen world. Why not then do all you can? "Oh, I do not see or hear them." But others do, and *you know* they are "without God, without Christ, and without hope." The missionary brethren are ready to apply your charity. Can you, *knowingly*, let a family starve, when seen by a brother's eye, who is willing to be the almoner of your bounty? Is it enough to say, *you* have not seen them? Where will this principle lead? Is it not the duty of a sinner to believe in Christ, though he has not seen him? to escape hell, though he has not heard its wailings? or fly to heaven, though he has not been, like Paul, caught up thither? And may a follower of Christ withhold the gospel from dying millions, because he has not seen them? If, in the spirit of Christ, you had obeyed his parting command, "*Go ye into all the world*," you would not have been denied the sight; nor will you be, when you stand in judgment. *You will see heathen there*, and your Master too.

FOURTH ERROR. *That a professor may grow in grace, and yet not in obedience to Christ.* Hence multitudes imagine that they are growing in holiness—in likeness to Christ and meetness for heaven, who are as indolent, as obstinate, as unteachable, as worldly-minded, as vainly ambitious, as covetous, nay, some far more so, after years of church membership, than after the first months of their professed conversion. For proof, inquire, who are the prayerful, active, cheerful, generous spirits in the church—ready to every good work? Are they always the more advanced in the family of Christ; those who might be expected to have most of their Master's spirit? True, there are here and there Calebs and Annas, and we regard them with sincere veneration and love; but is not the sentiment too often expressed, by some who ought to be first in benevolent enterprise, "that there is *too much giving and doing*, and not enough reliance on faith and prayer?" As

though their faith had not been dead long enough, or their economical prayers rejected long enough! Has a missionary over forty years of age been seen for half a century entering the heathen field, from increased love to Christ and dying millions?

But, it is said, "young men can acquire new languages with more ease." This may, as a general fact, be true. But "prayers and pains, through faith in Jesus Christ, will do any thing," said the father and pattern of American missionaries, (John Eliot,) who had just mastered the Indian tongue and finished the grammar at the age of forty-two, and who afterwards translated the whole Bible. Scott, also, acquired the Arabic and Susoo when past *sixty*, to aid in preparing missionaries. In view of such examples, is there not a radical defect, when increased acquaintance with the wants and desolations of the globe, and a nearing to death and judgment, produce no increase of benevolence, and no deepening sympathy in the cries of dying millions? Can such professors be *growing in grace?* be breathing more and more of the *spirit of a Savior*, who labored till death for the good of souls? "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, *shall flourish* in the courts of our God." How flourish? "They shall *still bring forth fruit in old age.*"

FIFTH ERROR. *That the measure of interest and effort the people are to take in the world's conversion should be left entirely or chiefly with the minister.* Hence, if he happen to be a secular man, and Demas like, love his own interests more than the salvation of a world, and therefore feel, and pray, and preach, as though his ministerial office were only a trade, the people seem to think and act, as if they were doing God service, if they but imitate their minister; and secure as much of this world as they can, whatever becomes of God's glory and the souls of men. "Like people, like priest," said the inspired prophet: and so it has ever been. Look at Christendom, and you can read the character of the clergy in the character of the people. In the Roman Catholic church this principle is carried so far, that the priest virtually *thinks*, and *believes*, and *repents* for the people, though he can neither die for the people nor stand for them in judgment. But how mean such a spirit! What true patriot would permit his general *alone* to spill his blood for his country? How senseless! Who but an idiot would expect his minister to be honest for him? Why then expect him, in any respect, to act the Christian in your stead? What saith the Savior? "If any man follow *me*, he shall not walk in darkness, but in

light." He shall never be at a loss, as to what is duty. And says Paul, "Be ye followers of me, *as I am of Christ.*" Suppose your minister does not sympathize with Christ in his love, labor, sufferings, and death for the salvation of a lost world; does not hold up the tremendous alternative of giving or withholding the gospel from perishing men; does not lay the claim of personal obligation upon your conscience; does not tell you to do what you can for dying millions, and "do it with your might." *Have you not the Bible?* and does not that plainly tell you, "If *any man* have not the spirit, (not of his minister,) but of *Christ*, he is none of his?" It was enough for the brethren of the rich man in hell, that "they had *Moses and the prophets*, let them hear them;" but *you* have not only these, but Christ and the apostles. Wo, wo, wo, then be to you, if you hear not, follow not, obey not them. Instead of waiting for others, let each Christian resolve in God's strength to be the humble instrument of bringing, at least, *one sinner to repentance annually*, and how soon might the world be converted to Christ!

SIXTH ERROR. *That professors of religion may, and ought to make bold and advantageous contracts for themselves, but not for the glory of God, and the good of souls.* This they often do, even beyond their present means, and never think of charging themselves, or being charged, as imprudent or blameable. Where is the professor who has not, in the enterprise of business, adventured his property? True, he expects to succeed, and generally does succeed. But should a Christian merchant adventure on God's providence, in a Bible, or Tract, or Missionary, or Education enterprise, one half the amount he has again and again ventured in some mercantile prospect, or worldly speculation, how many would at once brand him with rashness or imprudence! Should a Christian farmer promise to the Lord's treasury the amount of the last field for which he has bound himself, would not some economical Judas be ready to say, "Why?" Should a Christian politician engage his personal efforts to supply with a Bible the destitute, or with a monthly Tract each family, or to secure the Sabbath School children, or the Temperance pledge, of only the same township or district he has often pledged to the ballot box, how many of his brethren would cry out, "he is over-acting—he is beside himself!" Thousands may be bold, fearless, enterprising, generous, and magnanimous, for themselves and this vain world, but not for God and eternity! No; here, though God is insulted, and souls are dying by untold millions, we must be all calculation, all caution, all penuriousness, all distrust! A

soldier may drain his *life's blood* for his country or a name, and who withholds his eulogy? But a blood-bought soldier of the cross may not drain his *purse* for the glory of his Redeemer and the salvation of a world, without being branded as an enthusiast; and that too by professed Christians! No marvel, that the world has not been, nor is soon likely to be converted, while such principles pass for orthodox, in the church of that Savior who has declared, "Verily I say unto you, there is *no man* that hath left *house*, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or *lands*, for my sake and the gospel's; but he shall receive a hundred fold *now* in this time, and in the world to come, eternal life." Shall we enterprise for our little selves, because we *may* succeed; but not for our glorious Master, who has thus pledged his veracity that we *shall* succeed, a hundred fold now, and an eternal fold hereafter? What would such faithless calculators have thought and said, had they been at Ephesus, when a few Christians of that city, for conscience' sake and the gospel's, at once sacrificed books to the value of "fifty thousand pieces of silver?" O, what was this to the loss of one soul, those corrupting books might have occasioned, had they not been burnt? Could those master spirits in speculation, Judas and Balaam, return to earth, *they* would tell with an emphasis, the profit or loss, the wisdom or madness, of the wordly enterprises in which they embarked. But how different the testimony of the "poor widow" justified by Christ, who fearlessly embarked her *all* to serve the temple of God! What too would be the testimony of that noble army of martyrs, who ventured *all* for Christ? Little do indolent, covetous, unbelieving or heartless professors imagine, that, however long their connexion with the school of Christ, or orthodox their creed, they may be less than babes in the true knowledge of God. For, says Jehovah, "the people that *do know* their God, shall be strong and do exploits." God loves the man—and Christ loves him, and will honor him before assembled worlds, who, in every good enterprise takes prompt hold, and holds on, however many, one or a million, refuse to co-operate. "Them that honor me, I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed," saith the Lord.

LAST ERROR. *That personal and present duty may be transferred or delayed.* If a parent command his son to do some reasonable and immediate duty, will the obedience of *his sister* release the son? Here we see that duty involves a *personal obligation*, and cannot be transferred by the son to the sister, without the guilt of rebellion. And

suppose the son acknowledges his personal obligation to obey his father, but says, "I will not do it *now*, but when it *suits* me—when it is *convenient*—when I *choose*." What idea has that son of filial duty, or parental authority? Has he not made his own will paramount to his father's? But he has only disowned *present obligation;* i. e. has positively rebelled. Apply this to the practical theology of tens of thousands. God speaks in the Bible, and speaks to them; "Do as ye would be done by"—"do good to *all men* as you have opportunity;" tell every creature, there is a Savior from eternal ruin. And have they obeyed? Obeyed! One promptly replies, "It is not convenient;" another, "I have not the qualifications;" another, "There are heathen at home;" another, "It will cost too much;" another, "It will do no good;" another, "I have my own business to attend to;" another, "I have my family to provide for;" another, "The heathen are given to Christ, and God will bring them in;" another, "*I* will not, but *others* may;" and another—but we forbear. Thus thousands and tens of thousands, *in the church*, openly disobey Christ; while only here and there one says, "Here am I, Lord, send me;" and only a few more, out of fifty millions or professing Christians, are willing to add, "Go, Brother, and we will aid, *to the extent of our ability*." Yes, it is literally true, only here and there one is thus despatched to the world of heathen; whilst, in every twenty-five or thirty years, six hundred millions of those immortals are sacrificed to our indolence, our luxury, our pride, our covetousness, our hypocrisy, our ingratitude to that Savior, who poured out his blood, that all who believe might have life through his name. Yes, and this cruel sacrifice of millions is yearly made, simply for want of our feeling that *personal and present obligation to deny ourselves for Christ*, which we can no more evade, than we can the witness of our own conscience, or the awards of the judgment day. Well, that day is hastening on; and *each* of us shall give account of *himself* to God; and by this plain rule be judged, "*If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his*." And, "he that knew his Lord's will, but did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." Dare we, then, amid the light now blazing upon us, still put off present duty, and let another generation go down to the second death? Oh, Zion, did your *Master* so? Were he now in your place, would *he* do so? Or can he longer bear this neglect of duty? Will you not then at length obey his reiterated call, louder than the thunders and sweeter than the harmonies of the heavens—*O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the*

high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength?

But not merely the commands of a dying Savior and the calls of distant nations now summon to special effort. The insidious progress of infidelity—the spreading contempt of all religion—the maddening strife for mere worldly gains—the deep and general slumber of Israel's hosts—and above all, the insidious wiles of the Adversary, setting one against another, and thus wasting those energies which might pour light on the kingdom of darkness—these, these are the affecting "signs of the times;" and these, superadded to the cries of waking millions in heathen lands, admonish all the truly faithful to unite their humble efforts, and to pour forth the unceasing prayer, "*O Lord, revive thy work. O Lord, send salvation.*"

Let them do this, and soon, very soon, the melting heavens will rain down righteousness; Zion be universally refreshed, her peace become like a river, and her prosperity like the waves of the sea. Who then, that knows these things, and realizes the flight of time and the infinite worth of souls, will not now say, with all earnestness and sincerity, *From this hour, from this moment,* CHRIST *shall be my only Lord, and his example and precepts my only rule of life?* AMEN.

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SERMON CCXXXV.

By GARDINER SPRING, D. D., New-York.

THE ALARMING POWER OF SIN.

Jeremiah, 13, 23. *Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, who are accustomed to do evil.*

This passage, like some others in the sacred writings, is not to be interpreted in the strictest sense. Of the same description is the declaration of Christ; "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." And yet rich men are saved; though the difficulties in the way of their salvation are many and great. So, in some instances, are men long accustomed to do evil, diverted from their courses of iniquity. But this is not usual. It is a truth which should affect the minds of every class of my audience, that,

The long continued impenitence of men augments the difficulties in the way of their salvation.

This is the truth which I propose to illustrate in this discourse. And,

I. A most obvious thought which illustrates this general observation is, that *the habits of men are strengthened and confirmed by indulgence.*

It is a common remark, that the influence of habit is one of the most powerful in our mental constitution. We cannot explain this phenomenon; the fact we know; and it is of vast importance that we should know it. A repetition of the same thoughts and actions is so apt to ensure their continuance, that it is one of the most difficult things in the world to check this habitual operation of the mind, and give it a different direction from that in which it has been wont to flow. Even habits which relate to matters of indifference, become inveterate, and are with great difficulty modified and overcome. Especially are they obstinate, when they are under the control of some prevailing disposition, and fall in with the natural inclination of the mind.

Now, the habits which distinguish wicked men, are all governed by a heart alienated from God and holiness: nor is any other thought or purpose grateful to their mind, except those which subserve its depraved inclinations. The longer such a man continues in his sinful courses, the more fully his mind becomes trained in these habits of resistance to all that is good. His thoughts have become so familiar with sin, that his native sinfulness is invigorated and fortified; and to all the strength of natural corruption, he has added the growth and vigor of this moral training. His mind not only has by nature, a strong propensity to evil, an invariable tendency to depart from God; but from every step in his course has acquired increased facilities in this downward career, and is more and more inclined to depart by every act of departure thus repeated.

Here is the sinner's danger, who is accustomed to do evil. The course of his thoughts has so long preserved a downward tendency, that the channel has become deep, and the current cannot easily be led off. He has been so long enchained by the fatal power of *habit*, that he clanks his fetters and loves his bondage. Who has the energy to vanquish this most irresistible power? You might almost as well hope to persuade the wind or the storm, as such a man. Before the blasting, deadening influence *of habit* every effort, every thought, I had almost said, every hope of seriousness has withered. He is "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." He is insensibly led on from one course of wickedness to another, till he is under a sort of necessity of sinning. He has taken so many steps in this downward road, and his progress has become so accelerated and impetuous that he cannot resist it. "All things are possible with God." And yet, how much more difficult is it for such a man to become holy, than for men over whom this progressive and silent influence of habit has not yet obtained the guilty predominance! Such a man is the veriest servant of sin; and however sensible or insensible he may be of his servitude, he is probably enslaved beyond the hope of deliverance.

II. The *influence of this world*, as men advance in life, usually becomes more perplexing, and a greater hindrance to their conversion. The greatest *outward* obstacle with which men have to contend in the work of their salvation, is the influence of the world. Here are the perplexities of business. Here are the allurements of wealth. Here are the smiles of friendship. Here are the blandishments of pleasure. Here are the corrupting influences of public opinion. Here are the pernicious tendencies of fashion and vain amusements. Here every thing that is noxious to piety is nourished and strengthened. The world is a soil luxuriant in sin, and fed only by putrescency and death. While the eye is pleased, the ear regaled, and all the senses delighted, there is every thing to corrupt and destroy.

The man who is advanced even to the meridian of human life, is apt to have formed a thoroughly worldly character. His plans are on a larger scale; his connexions are more extended; his arrangements are more complicated than at earlier periods; and consequently his cares multiply, his toil increases, his time is occupied, and in the midst

of all this overwhelming solicitude about the world, the concerns o eternity are lost sight of and forgotten. The *spirit* of the world take deeper hold of him the longer he lives. He becomes more dissatisfie and more grasping. The love of money becomes so deeply imbedde in his heart, that it puts him well nigh beyond the reach of solemn an salutary impressions. If the young plead the pressure of care, and th want of time, and the influence of worldly associates, as a reason fo their inattention to the concerns of religion, what shall be thought o these influences upon more advanced years? A multitude of men, wh in their youth deferred the business of religion to a more convenien season, have seen with regret that the longer they have lived, and th more they looked for leisure and retirement, and the more they hope to be removed from the influence of those who would ruin and destroy —the more have their perplexities increased, and the more has ever successive year contributed to throw obstacles in the path to heaven A man in middle life may, now and then, feel powerful inducement to become pious; the grasp of the world may, for a short season, b partially relaxed; and he may withdraw himself for a little from hi old companions, to think of the scenes of that invisible world to whic he is hastening; but soon his courage and self-denial fail him, and h is soothed or frightened away from his purpose. Some golden bai some earnest entreaty, some subtile stratagem, some unhallowed influ ence disheartens him, and he goes back again to the world. Th world is still his idol. The men of the world are still his chosen com panions. The pleasures of the world are still his selected joy. Th concerns of time absorb the attention and exhaust the vigor of hi mind. Having thrown himself into the current, he becomes weake and weaker, and though the precipice is near, he cannot now stem th tide and reach the shore.

Here is the danger of the men who are accustomed to do evil They are immersed in sense. The moral atmosphere they breath is poison. They are more and more endangered every hour they live They have fallen into those "foolish and hurtful lusts, which drow men in destruction and perdition." Conscience is laid asleep. Th gates of that unearthly world seem closed upon them; the celestial cit is almost hidden from their view. The glimpses of light they once en joyed are dying away; and their eye fixes itself less and less o eternity.

III. As years increase, men *become less interested in the subjec of religion, and more obdurate and averse to any alteration in thei moral character.* The season of sensitiveness and ardent affection i gone by. The heart is no longer warm in any of its attachments The moral perceptions have become inactive and heavy. The boson is now rarely penetrated with the feelings of obligation, or any o those tender emotions which once invited or encouraged a religiou influence. The mind loiters and the sluggish spirit becomes inactiv and torpid. It possesses little of that unbiassed judgment, that teach ableness which are the hope of earlier years; and not only is it mor subject to prejudices and less docile, but more disposed to resist religiou

instruction and turn from it in disgust. The Sabbath, the Bible, the sanctuary, the domestic altar, once so solemn and tender, by degrees lose their power to interest and affect them. Sermons, and prayers, and songs of praise, and Christian counsels that once addressed the youthful sinner with so much effect, have lost their persuasive influence. The heart has become listless and like adamant. Conscience has become so seared and hardened by its long-continued resistance of acknowledged obligations, that nothing rouses them. The only effect which the most powerful instructions or the best adapted means of grace are apt to have upon such a mind, is increasing insensibility and hardness, and greater boldness in iniquity. Men advanced in life have comparatively few convictions of their sin and danger; and those few they easily suppress; and pass carelessly along without God in the world, without the hope of his favor, or the fear of his wrath.

And with such a state of mind, they become more and more averse to any radical alteration in their character. Their enmity to God and their aversion to holiness become more deeply riveted. They often doubt whether there is such a thing as conversion. The name is an offence to them; and when they occasionally hear it mentioned, they perhaps turn it into ridicule. They cannot endure to be disturbed in their sins. When you urge the claims of piety upon them, they treat the whole matter with neglect and contempt. They have *made up their minds* to run the hazard of perdition, rather than be roused to the severe and dreadful effort of forsaking their sins.

Here too is the danger of men accustomed to impenitence. The scenes of eternity to such men have a melancholy and direful aspect. Every thing is conspiring to harden, deceive, and destroy them; and there is little probability that these augmented obstacles to their conversion will ever be removed. And they themselves deeply feel the weight of these powerful discouragements. Ask the sinner of forty, or fifty, or sixty years, whether his prospects are growing brighter; and he will tell you, that the longer he lives they are growing darker and darker. Clouds gather over his path. His sun is going down, and soon every beam of light will be withdrawn. This leads me to observe,

IV. The *thought of multiplied and long continued transgression is very apt to discourage all attempts at repentance.*

This is a temptation by no means peculiar to advanced years, but for which there is in the nature of the case stronger reason than at any previous period. The man who has been accustomed to iniquity is often led to see how his habits of sinning have become confirmed by indulgence; how the influence of the world has excluded well nigh every thought of God and heaven; how his obduracy and aversion to holiness have increased; and he very naturally becomes depressed and discouraged by these reflections. That guilty Deceiver, who "blinds the minds of them that believe not, and worketh in the children of disobedience," and employs all his power to ensnare and destroy, knows how to take advantage of their age, their character, and their condition, and not unfrequently suggests and gives these melancholy reflections a

weight and power that unnerve the courage, and prevent all effort for salvation. In former periods men somewhat advanced in years have paid some attention to the subject of religion; but they have so often returned to a state of stupidity, and have so long neglected and abused the offers of the divine mercy, and the obstacles to their conversion have now become so multiplied, that they feel, for the most part, that it will be useless for them seriously to think of any alteration in their character. Not unfrequently they will tell you,—"*Once the work might have been performed; but it is now too late; the favorable opportunity is past; human life is but a dream, and the day of hope is gone by!*" There are seasons when the long catalogue of their sins, though it does not humble, depresses and discourages them. I have known men in this condition. And I could not refrain from sympathizing with their dejection, and being discouraged with them and for them. It is a dark—very dark problem, whether persons of this description will ever repent and believe the gospel. It is true that God's mercies are infinite; that those who seek him shall find him; that the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin; and that while there is life, there may be hope; and yet a more hopeless condition this side eternity cannot easily be conceived, than the condition of such a man. The mournful truth may not be suppressed, that there is a deep gloom over all his spiritual prospects. What shall be said to the man who has passed the mid-day of human life; who has grown old in thoughtlessness and sin, and begins now and then to throw his eye backward "over the desert of wasted years?" Has he no reason to write bitter things against himself? Can he recall the verdure of youth? Can he plant flowers in the desert now? Can he "stretch out the withered remnant of time," and bring back the facilities of repentance he once enjoyed? Is it an easy matter for such a man to arrest and renounce that obduracy of moral feeling, which has been growing upon him for half a century? I may add,

V. There *is awful reason to apprehend that God will leave men of this description to perish in their sins.* No man is sufficient, in his own strength and without the grace of the Holy Spirit, even at the most auspicious period of human life, to break the bondage of sin and flee from the coming wrath. And if any class of men have special need of this divine influence, they are those who have been long accustomed to the paths of death. They have nothing to oppose to their deeply imbedded depravity, and if a sovereign God leave them to their own undirected and unsupported resolution, they must perish in their sins. It is his prerogative to arrest and bring the sons of men to the footstool of his mercy at *any period* of life; and nothing may impose a limit to his sovereign power. His distinguishing and wonderful grace *may* pluck them as brands from the burning in defiance of all these obstructions. But will he do it? Is there reason to hope, or to fear? He can change the skin of the Ethiopian, and he sometimes does it. But does the analogy of his grace justify the expectation that this miracle of mercy will be often wrought toward the old and hardened offender?

If we look into the Bible, we shall find that most of the Prophets and Apostles, as well as those who were converted through their instrumentality, were called into the kingdom of God in childhood, or youth, or in the dawn and vigor of manhood. When the Holy Spirit so largely descended upon the Israelites in the wilderness, its influence was confined almost exclusively to the young. So it was under those peculiar dispensations of mercy, which visited that same people at the close of their captivity in Babylon, and immediately after the building of the second temple. The great body of those who were rescued from the bondage of sin, during that general work of grace on the continent of Europe and in the British islands at the period of the great Reformation, were persons who had scarcely reached the meridian of life. One of the distinctive features of all revivals of religion is, that they have prevailed principally among the young. Where the adorable and ever blessed Spirit has visited the same community frequently, and at several different and successive periods, it has been observed that the period during which his influence has been suspended has usually been long enough to allow a new generation to grow up and become the subjects of the work. It has also been remarked, that in ordinary seasons, the individuals who have occasionally been brought into the kingdom of Christ, with few exceptions, have been from those not habituated to impenitence. The multitude of those who have united themselves with the visible church of God, in our cities and in our villages, have been from classes of men under forty years of age. There have been fewer between thirty and forty, than between twenty and thirty; and when you go beyond forty years, like the scattered grapes in the outmost branches after the vintage is over, there is only here and there *one*. And the farther beyond this period, the fewer do they become. Sometimes there is one of a city, and two of a tribe. And as you descend into the more remote vale of years, it is a miracle of mercy, if you find a solitary individual. So it is, so far as my knowledge extends, for the most part all over the world. Almost the only exception to this remark is found in places where men have *never sat under faithful preaching* and never enjoyed a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit until late in life. In such places I have known persons brought into the vineyard at the eleventh hour. And this is also true of heathen lands. But even here, there are comparatively few instances of conversion from among those who have grown old in sin. Young women, like Catharine Brown, and young men, like Asaad Shidiak, and younger than they, these form the mass of conversions even in heathen lands.

So strongly is this truth impressed in the minds of those who are in the habit of observing the usual operations of the divine mercy, that you never hear a sermon on the importance of early piety, but the preacher enforces it. You never saw a Christian parent, or Christian teacher, but felt the weight of it, and urged it in his prayers, and was impelled by it to solicitude and tears for his youthful charge. Every Christian community feels it; and its uniform language is to speak of its children and youth as the *hope of the church*. There may be some

faint and trembling expectations from men who have crossed the mer dian of life, but there is much fear and despondency. Go to the Bibl and inquire what period of human life receives the marked tokens c the divine favor; and you will find intimations rich in encouragemer and promise to the young, and most appalling to the old.

Here then is the danger of those who are accustomed to do evil. W see these facts, and they are inwoven with our own experience. An how tremendous the comment upon the sentiment of our text! I what direful abandonment does it leave the men who are accustome to do evil! Ah! beloved hearers, dark and long are the shadows tha hang over the prospects of those who have not thought of God and ete nity before the best of their years are gone. God would have the lam of piety lighted early. He would have the dew, the dawn, the flowe of our existence. Since men who are accustomed to do evil have re fused the calls of the divine mercy in the prime and vigor of their day what wonder, if when they call, God should not answer? Since the declined his service when they were best capable of serving him, wh should it be thought strange that he should hide his face from them now that "the evil days come, and the years draw nigh, in which the have no pleasure?" Think you that he solicits those days of trembling when "the almond tree flourishes, and the grasshopper is a burden? Will he be put off with the faded refuse of a life spent in the service c sin? Does his righteous government afford encouragement for sinning after this sort? Is heaven a mere infirmary? Is the kingdom c God such a hospital as to open its gates to the decrepit, and th maimed, who can live no longer to the world and its lusts?

Such are some of the considerations which illustrate the truth contained in our text;—a truth specially designed to urge upon all solemn attention to the great concerns of religion and the soul, now in an accepted time. In applying to some practical purposes the view which has been presented, I may therefore be allowed to address thre classes of my audience. And,

1. What is the admonition which it addresses *to the aged.* T you, my venerable hearers, who are still without Christ and withou hope in the world, it "holds up the hour glass of human life, and point to the few sands that remain." It directs your eyes to the vast futurity that is just before you, and on the wall which separates it from you view inscribes, "Thou art weighed in the balances and found want ing." It announces that what the means of grace could do for you they have probably done; and that your day of merciful visitation ha well nigh reached its last limits. Once, your years were full of promise but this bright and unclouded morning is gone. Your sun no longe rises clear, serene, "full of beauty and full of hope;" but it has pas its meridian, and is descending in a cloud. Observe that withered an solitary oak. It is stripped of its branches by the hand of time. Th rains descend upon it; the sun throws his genial rays upon its top an upon its roots; but it has no life and verdure: and the more the sun shines and the rains descend, the more dry and seared does it become Such is the aged sinner. His habits are so deeply rooted, and th

light of truth and the dews and rains of divine mercy have fallen upon him so long, that they serve rather to dry up his moral sensibilities, and leave him like fuel for the flames. The most fearful storms are often preceded by a death-like calm. Oh! this undisturbed, this imperturbable repose, here, just at the mouth of the grave, seems to me like the forebodings of the last tempest—like the premonitors of the second death.

My venerable friends, yours is no time for thoughtlessness and unconcern. God still waits that he may be gracious. And he may wait till the last sand of life has fallen. The divine mercy, whose ways are above our ways, and whose thoughts are above our thoughts, may follow you, till you descend to the tomb. And Christian tenderness may follow you. And I pray God, that ministerial solicitude and faithfulness may follow you. But Oh! how ineffably important to you is the present hour! Your *hoary hairs* may be even now "a crown of glory, if found in the way of righteousness." With what emphasis may we say *to you*—"To-day, *if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts!*" I implore you, let not another hour be lost! This very call rejected, may seal your destiny.

2. Our subject addresses *those who are in middle life.* There are probably not a few in this assembly, who have no hope that they are the children of God, who are just crossing the mid-way of their earthly existence. Beloved friends, you occupy a post of danger. It would have been well for you, by a sincere and humble consecration of yourselves to God in your youth, to have become fortified against the temptations which assail every man in the midst of his days. The period most auspicious to the interests of your immortality is gone.

Already has the world gained an influence over you, which, whenever the day of repentance comes, will cost you many a severe struggle to resist. You have just reached that period of life when men form the most unjust estimate of earthly good, and when wealth, reputation, and power most fatally fascinate the mind. You have now stronger expectations of living, than you had in your youth, or will have in old age. You are now in the midst of your most important designs and pursuits, and probably at the zenith of your earthly glory. Every thing now conspires to turn away your thoughts from God and eternity. Your mountain stands strong. You occupy a lofty eminence; and, as I just intimated, it is a post of danger. Your feet stand on slippery places. More than half the inhabitants of this globe, have been swept into the grave since you entered upon the stage of life; and soon you will either be numbered with them, or with those whose impenitence and hoary age provoke God to abandon them. Why, then, shall not some of these worldly plans give way to the purpose of seeking the kingdom of God? Why shall not this enterprising spirit, subdued and softened by a child-like sense of your dependence, breathe its energy into the great pursuits and business of religion? Better be less knowing, less honorable, less affluent, than lose your souls. Better reduce your plans to a narrower compass, than be at last cast away. Better leave every other object unattained, than your eternal salvation. Bet-

ter give up every other hope, than the hope of heaven. O, what a flood of sorrows will roll in upon you by and by, when you see that "the harvest is past, the summer is ended, and you are not saved!"

But,

3. Our subject addresses *the young*. Yours, my young friends, is the season of hope. Fully as your hearts are by nature set in you to do evil, the habits of iniquity, that are peculiar to older sinners, are not yet formed. Your minds are not irrecoverably engrossed by the world. There is no such obstinate aversion to the duties of religion, and no such absolutely disheartening burden of iniquity, as will hereafter oppress you. You have not yet been abandoned to fatal security, nor left to fill up the measure of your wickedness. You are not beyond the reach of instruction, of alarm, of counsel. You have not yet reached the giddy height of your prosperity; nor have you become so embarrassed by cares and society, as to shut out the hope of heaven. The Spirit of God has not departed from you; but lingers around your thoughts, and follows you to your retirement, and hovers over your pillow. This is eminently your day of promise. If you become early devoted to God, you may live to accomplish much for his cause and kingdom in the world; your influence and example may allure multitudes around you to the love and practice of godliness; and you may be delivered from the guilt of that destructive influence, which will plant thorns in your dying pillow. You may become eminently fitted for the service of God in this age of mercy, and be permitted to take a distinguished part in ushering in the glory that is soon to arise upon the earth. And what is an unspeakably sweet and precious thought, *you will become specially near and dear to Christ.* He will remember the kindness of your youth, and the love of your espousals. He will gather you with His arms, and carry you in His bosom. And when bitter troubles roll in upon you, He will be your hiding-place; and when enemies rise against you, He will cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall trust. He will furnish you evidence of your acceptance with Him such as is denied to the few that follow Him at a later period. He will give you a maturity of mind, a sweetness of expectation that will be like the breath of the morning, and like ointment poured forth. In future years you will have something to look back upon beside years of unmingled iniquity; and memory, which is the source of so much joy and woe, and which runs back with such wonderful spontaneity to the seasons of childhood and youth, will discover here and there some verdant spots in your career on which it delights to linger, because they are fragrant with the dews that descended upon the mountains of Zion. And when your Redeemer shall come to judge the world, He will look with peculiar complacency on those who devote the dawn of their existence to Him; and acknowledge, and crown and reward them in such a way as to evince to the universe that he has a special delight in early piety.

And now, amid all the earthly hopes you so fondly cherish, and which are empty and delusive, and which like bubbles rise for a moment on the stream, and then for ever disappear, why will you not,

in the morning of life, choose religion and heaven? You will not lament it when the days of darkness come. You will not regret it when you are old. You will not repent of it when you come to die. And when you stand before Christ in judgment, it will be no grief of heart to you to hear Him say, "*Them that honor me I will honor!*"

SERMON CCXXXVI.

By Rev. S. L. POMROY,
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THE UNCHANGEABLE GOD.

James 1, 17. *With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.*

Every syllable which inspired penmen have written respecting the character, will and purposes of God, ought to be contemplated by us with profound interest. We are the creatures of God. He made and upholds us by the word of his power. We are in his hands as clay in the hands of the potter. Our existence and our eternal destiny hang upon his word. We are, therefore, deeply concerned to know what God is, what he requires, and what we are to expect from him. Is he wise? Is he just? Does he exercise a watchful providence over his creatures? Does he care for men? Is he good? Will he always remain what he now is? These are questions of great moment, and none but God himself can give a satisfactory answer to them. In the scriptures, he has condescended to answer these and all other suitable inquiries respecting himself. To the question, whether God is ever subject to change, the text furnishes an unequivocal reply. It asserts the immutability of Jehovah in language which cannot be misunderstood. With him is *no variableness;* that is, no capacity or possibility of change, and as if this were not enough, it is added, neither *shadow* of turning—nothing which bears the most distant resemblance to change. The sentiment thus clearly taught in the passage before us, I propose to discuss on the present occasion. In regard to the nature of this attribute, I remark,

1. *It implies that God is unchangeable in his essence.* It is supposed there must be something, which may be said to constitute the divine essence, which is distinguishable from the divine attributes. Whatever this may be, we may safely assert respecting it, that it is uncreated, incorruptible, immutable, and eternal. Its immutability is inferred from the fact of its being uncreated. It always existed, and is therefore independent of every thing else. It is the cause of all other causes, and, therefore, beyond the reach of all extraneous or foreign in-

fluence. Nothing can be brought to bear upon it which shall have the least tendency to change it. It is impossible, from the nature of the case, that it should be subject either to enlargement or diminution. It was never young—it grows not old. All things else may change; the sun, moon, and stars and visible heavens will wax old and vanish away; but this remains the same, yesterday, to-day and for ever.

2. *It implies that God is unchangeable in regard to his attributes.* That is to say, He has always been, and ever will be, omniscient, omnipresent, omnipotent, and independent. So of his other attributes, his benevolence, wisdom, justice, mercy and truth. These are without any fluctuation. He is not benevolent to-day, and the reverse to-morrow; neither is he just and wise, at one time, and void of wisdom and rectitude at another. But he is always unchangeably benevolent, wise, holy, just, merciful, and true; always independent, almighty, omniscient, and sovereign. His attributes are the same now that they were countless ages before creation began, when he filled the universe alone, and they will continue the same through endless ages to come. "Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; but thou art the same." With the divine perfections is "no variableness."

3. *The doctrine of divine immutability implies that God is unchangeable in his purposes.* He does not, like weak, fallible men, purpose one thing to-day, and another different thing to-morrow; his purposes are eternally the same. This uniformity or immutability of purpose results necessarily from the divine attributes. It is impossible for God to be, intellectually and morally, what he is, without having eternal purposes. A change of purpose implies some defect of wisdom or goodness or power. But in all these respects, God is absolutely and immutably perfect. His designs, therefore, can have "no variableness." Have we read, "the counsel of the Lord standeth forever; the thoughts of his heart to all generations?" "Every purpose of the Lord shall stand." "Hath he said, and shall he not do it?"

4. *The doctrine under consideration, implies that God is unchangeable in regard to his promises and threatenings.* The promises and threatenings of God are only the expressions of his purpose, in relation to particular things. For instance, his promise to give the heathen to his Son for an inheritance, is but an expression of his immutable purpose so to do. So his threatenings to punish the wicked with everlasting destruction from his presence, are only the expressions of his unchangeable determination thus to punish them. If, then, the purposes or determinations of God are immutable, his promises and threatenings must be equally so. Neither the one nor the other can possibly fail of accomplishment. If the attributes of God remain unchangeably perfect, his purposes can never alter; and hence his promises and threatenings, which are expressions of his purpose, must continue the same. We see then what is implied in the doctrine of divine immutability. It implies that God is unchangeable in his essence, attributes, purposes, promises, and threatenings.

I will now adduce some direct proof that immutability is a trait in the character of Jehovah. This may be drawn,

1. *From his absolute self-existence and eternity.* Since God exists, and does not derive his existence from any other being, it is evident that he must have life within himself. This "life in himself" is neither more nor less than his absolutely necessary existence. And to say, that God exists of necessity, and independently of all other beings, is the same as to say, that his existence never had a beginning, and will never have an end. And being thus self-existent and eternal, it is manifest that no cause or influence whatever can affect or alter his nature, in the least degree. He is, therefore, absolutely unchangeable. To state the argument in a different form: every effect must have a cause. No change can take place in the divine nature and attributes without an adequate cause. But no such cause can exist; as is manifest from the fact, that God is self-existent, and independent of every other being and thing. With him, therefore, is "no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

2. *The same thing is evident from the plain declarations of scripture.* "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent." "Hath he said, and shall he not do it? Hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" "God said unto Moses, I am that I am." "Also the strength of Israel will not lie nor repent." "I am the Lord, I change not. "He is of one mind, and who can turn him?" Jesus Christ, who "was with God and was God," is declared to be "the same yesterday, to-day and forever." "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." "With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Other passages, of similar import, are frequent and numerous in the inspired volume.

Such is the nature, and such the proof, of the divine immutability. We pass now to remark, in conclusion,

1. The attribute which has been under consideration constitutes the only solid ground of unlimited confidence in God. Were he possessed of every other perfection, and yet destitute of this, who could feel secure in his hand? His promises, his threatenings would be unworthy of confidence. What he purposed to-day, he might disannul to-morrow. His invitations might allure, only to disappoint. All confidence in the equity of the divine government must cease; and created intelligences be thrown into a state of agonising uncertainty. No trust could be reposed in the regularity even of the laws of nature. The seasons might capriciously change places, and seed-time and harvest, summer and winter, be mingled in strange confusion. The sun might forget to rise, and day and night come to a perpetual end. But we need fear no such events as these; God is unchangeable—"With Him is no variableness." His promises are sure. His threatenings cannot return unto him void. His purposes are immutable. He is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. Here is solid rock. The immutability of Jehovah affords ground for unlimited confidence.

2. If God is unchangeable, the great interests of Christ's kingdom are safe. The church of the living God hath passed through many and

great afflictions. The proud waters have often gone over her. She has been compelled to flee into the wilderness, to hide in unfrequented valleys, in dens and caves of the earth. Bloody, exterminating edicts have been levelled against her; and she has had to contend with the combined powers of renowned and mighty empires. But she has never been annihilated. Far from it. In the end she hath always come off victorious. And no wonder; for God who cannot lie, hath given his word, and confirmed it by an oath, that she shall live, and triumph, and overspread the earth. "Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." The church which he hath redeemed by the blood of his son, has ever been an object exceedingly dear to him. She is graven upon the palms of his hands, and her walls are continually before him. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts—he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye." He has even sent forth this decree; "The nation and the kingdom that will not serve thee, shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted." "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." What more can be desired? The word has gone out of his mouth—he hath pledged himself to defend his people; and "the strength of Israel will not lie, nor repent." "The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, saith the Lord" —"With whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." Here, then, in the immutable perfections of Jehovah, the church is safe. Here she hath "strong consolations." The resources of infinite wisdom, the strength of omnipotence are at her command. The rains may descend, the winds blow, the floods come, and rage in all their fury; it is in vain. The daughter of Zion shall despise them, and laugh them to scorn.

3. If God is unchangeable, then we have great encouragement to pray. Some, indeed, have contended, that this doctrine renders all prayer useless. But suppose, for a moment, that God were to be divested of this glorious attribute. He is now a mutable being. We are still his dependent creatures, and need, as much as ever, the blessings which he only can bestow. Shall we pray now, or shall we not pray? Who can inform us? If you say we must ask in order to receive; then it may be inquired, how, in what manner, with what spirit, must we pray, in order to ensure a favorable answer? What arguments shall we plead? Who can answer these questions? We know full well, that the time was when he required suppliants to come into his presence, with a humble, childlike temper of heart; but he may, long ere this, have changed his mind; and for aught we know he may now require some other posture of the soul. Who can tell us? Once he said, "Ask what ye will, believing, and it shall be done unto you." But will faith avail any thing now? Who can scatter these clouds of uncertainty? It is even possible, that all prayer may be fruitless, nay, exceedingly displeasing to him, and bring down upon the suppliant the fierceness of his anger. Take away the immutability of Jehovah, and this would be our condition in regard to the duty and privilege of prayer. No human being could have the least encouragement to pray. And should we pray, and obtain the thing we sought, a changeable God might revoke it the next hour.

and leave us destitute as before. Thus we should be afloat in a sea of shadows, doubts and dreadful uncertainties; driven about by fierce winds; wholly unable to tell where is safety, or where is danger. But we have the blessed assurance, that "with Him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." We may therefore know with infallible certainty, how and with what spirit to pray; what to pray for; what arguments to use. We may come boldly unto the throne of grace, and if we pray as directed, may confidently expect the blessing. What higher encouragement to prayer can be given? He hath promised; "he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself."

4. If God is immutable, then the sanctification and final salvation of every true believer are infallibly certain. The promises of the everlasting covenant assure him, that he shall receive grace and strength equal to his day; that his afflictions shall yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness, and work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; that all things shall work together for his good; that he shall be kept by the mighty power of God, through faith, unto salvation; and that he shall dwell in the blissful presence of his Redeemer for ever. How rich, and how large the promise! But what security has he that the great promise will be fulfilled? This is to be found in the glorious attribute of immutability. God cannot lie, and will not repent. Being "willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, he hath confirmed it by an oath; that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." Here, verily, the Christian hath "a strong consolation." Let him lay hold upon it with the strong hand of unwavering faith. When he prays, let him plead the promises of God's unchangeable covenant Such pleas he cannot resist, because "he cannot deny himself." Here are great encouragements to labor and pray for eminent attainments in holiness. Success is rendered certain by the immutable promise of Jehovah. This is enough. In the day of adversity therefore, in the day of darkness and sorrow, when earthly props and earthly friends fail, and the soul seems ready to sink in deep waters, let the Christian remember that God's "truth is like the great mountains which cannot be moved." He will never disappoint the trust reposed in his promises, either in time or eternity. His immutability secures their fulfilment both here and hereafter. Saints in heaven will never indulge a moment's apprehension respecting the permanence of their bliss; they will rejoice that God reigns, and the assurance that he will ever reign, and will ever be the same holy and blessed being that he now is, will fill all hearts with joy unspeakable and full of glory for ever.

5. If God is unchangeable, then all who are saved must ascribe their salvation to his eternal purpose. If God is unchangeable in any respect, he is so in his attributes. If he is unchangeable in his attributes, he must of necessity be unchangeable in his purposes. It seems to me impossible, in the nature of things, that the latter should be mu-

table, while the former remain immutable. His wisdom, and goodness, and power, then, being infinite and immutably perfect, it follows that all his plans and purposes are unchangeable and eternal. God has no new thoughts. His knowledge can neither be increased nor diminished. There can never be any occasion for his adopting a new purpose, unless we may suppose the occurrence of events which were unexpected; which however is impossible, for he seeth the end from the beginning. The purposes of God, then, are as immutable and eternal as his own nature. If it is now his purpose to sanctify and save any soul in this house, such has been his purpose from eternity. To deny this, is most clearly to make God an imperfect being. If then you are ever saved, you will owe it to the unchangeable and eternal purpose of God. Consider the following plain declarations of the inspired volume. "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." "Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified." "As many as were ordained to eternal life, believed." "God hath not appointed us to wrath; but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ; according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." What can be plainer? Who, that believes the scriptures, can doubt, that every Christian is called, and sanctified and saved, according to the eternal purpose of God? This great doctrine which exhibits so clearly the astonishing riches of the divine goodness and grace, is inseparably connected with the immutability of Jehovah. If God is unchangeable, this doctrine is true; if he is not unchangeable, it is not true. The two things stand or fall together.

"Well then," says an objector, "If I am to be saved, I *shall* be saved, do what I will." Not exactly so. If God has purposed your salvation, you will indeed be saved; yet not without repentance, faith, and holiness. It was the purpose of God to save Paul and his companions in the ship, from a watery grave, and bring them all safe to land; and this purpose he had made known to the apostle. Yet when some of them were about to betake themselves to the boat, Paul said to the centurion, "Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved." In like manner it may be the purpose of God to save some hard-hearted sinner now in this assembly; and yet I am authorized to say to him, that if he does not repent and believe the Gospel, he cannot be saved. The purpose of God, be it remembered, includes repentance, and faith, and holiness. It is a golden chain, every link of which is perfect. It is made fast in the unchangeableness of Jehovah, and extending down through the effectual calling, and the free justification, reaches to eternal glory.

6. If God is unchangeable, then the sinner "must make to himself a new heart and a right spirit," or perish without remedy. If rightly viewed, no attribute of the Godhead is more dreadful to the sinner, than the one which constitutes the theme of this discourse. Here he may

read his fearful, unchangeable doom, if he continues impenitent. It is God's unalterable determination to punish the unbelieving and unholy, with everlasting destruction from his presence, and from the glory of his power. We read this determination in all those thrilling denunciations which meet the eye on nearly every page of the inspired volume. The character of the sinner and the character of God are opposites. In order to a reconciliation, therefore, the one or the other must experience a great change. God hath, in his possession, all the resources of infinite wisdom and almighty power. He will not, he cannot change; and he *ought not* to change, if he could. He is already perfect, and no change can be made in his character which would not be for the worse. "I am the Lord, I change not. My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." "He is in one mind, and who can turn him?" "What then must become of the sinner, who will not make to himself a new heart? Can he escape? The threatenings, purposes, laws, attributes of the eternal God, are all leagued against the man that will not bow the knee and embrace the son of his love. That impassible gulph which lies between heaven and hell; what is it, but the immutability of God's purpose? It is certain, therefore, that, if the sinner continues to hold fast the weapons of his rebellion, his ruin must be complete, inevitable, eternal. Come then, my friends, let your decision now be made. Refuges of lies, vain excuses, idle dreams, put them all away; they cannot bear the light of eternity. Say with yourself, God is unchangeable; I must therefore be converted, or lie down in everlasting torments. And since life is but a vapor, I must be converted soon, or for ever bewail my fall. Eternity, oh, eternity! it is just at hand. Yet a little while and we shall all be in that mysterious, unknown country. What you do must be done quickly. Remember, there is but one channel through which the mercy of heaven flows down to this ruined world. Christ is that channel. He is the Mediator between God and rebel men. No man cometh unto the Father but by him. Approach in any other way, and the countenance of eternal Love will be darkened with a frown. But

> From the cross uplifted high,
> Where the Savior deigns to die,
> What melodious sounds we hear,
> Bursting on the ravished ear!—
> "Love's redeeming work is done—
> Come and welcome, sinner, come."

By the glories of heaven and the pains of hell, I entreat you, reject not this Savior. His love is wonderful, it passeth knowledge. To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart.

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SERMON CCXXXVII.

By NATHAN S. S. BEMAN, D. D., Troy.

PUNCTUALITY IN THE PAYMENT OF DEBTS.

Rom. 13, 8. *Owe no man any thing.*

The Bible, so far as it presents a code of morals, inculcates two great classes of practical duties; those which relate to God and those which relate to man. These duties are referred, in the same volume, to their appropriate affections—love to God and love to our fellow beings. To love God and obey him, are convertible terms; or they mutually imply the existence of each other; because love cannot warm the heart and regulate its pulsations, without securing obedience, and obedience can never characterize the life, when it is not secured by the principle of love. The one is the fountain, the other the stream.

The same connection exists between the spirit of true benevolence, or love to our fellow-men, and the discharge of relative duties. To love our fellow beings, is to fulfil the second great command of the law; because real love or benevolence, in its natural and spontaneous flow, must lead to those outward acts which are demanded by the various relations of one human being to another. Love and obedience, in this case, as in the former, will travel hand and hand. He that loves his fellow man, as required by the

united authority of law and gospel, will treat him, in the different circumstances of human life, with justice and mercy. On the other hand, he that is guilty of injustice or fraud, in any shape, violates the great law of benevolence, and does not love his neighbor as himself. The apostle clearly inculcates this sentiment in the text and context. He is treating of relative duties. "Render, therefore, to all their dues; tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not bear false witness, thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

The law of love, as here expounded, requires, on the one hand, that we should refrain from all those acts which would work "ill" to our neighbor, and, on the other, that we should perform those acts which result from our mutual relations, and which will promote our neighbor's happiness.

The words which I have selected as my text, though they relate to pecuniary or commercial transactions, stand in a very sacred connection. It is this: The law of God, so far as relative duties are concerned, requires us to abstain from every thing that would inflict injury upon our fellow men, and to do those things which will promote their greatest good. Every thing else is a violation of the law of God, as it respects relative duties. *To owe a man any thing*, is to violate this law. To pay our debts, is a duty expressly enjoined by the authority of the Bible; to refuse, or even *defer* to do this, is a sin against God.

"Owe no man any thing, but to love one another." There is one debt we may be always paying, and yet never fully discharge, and that is the debt of love. The claims of this debt, are, from the nature and relations of moral beings, inexhaustible and eternal. All other debts should be punctually discharged.

The subject of the present discussion, is PUNCTUALITY IN THE PAYMENT OF DEBTS.

The text is not intended to forbid men from entering into pecuniary responsibilities, or using their credit in the way of lawful business; but it enjoins punctuality in meeting contracts, or the payment of debts, as soon as they are due. In the former sense, a man may be in debt, without moral wrong: in the latter, where it is voluntary, he *cannot*. It may be further remarked, that the command of the text applies with equal force to *small* demands, as to large. "Owe no man ANY thing"—not even the smallest sum.

1. *A regard to a man's own word*, ought to secure punctuality in paying debts.

Contracting a debt always implies a promise of payment, and the time when such payment shall be made, is either a matter of stipulation, or must be gathered from circumstances. There is always a promise, either explicit or implied, which pledges a man's word, and that promise is to be interpreted by the same rules which apply to kindred subjects, and is not only binding in law, but is enforced by moral principle. Let the eye be directed, for a moment, to this pledge or promise. You purchase a piece of property of your neighbor, and tell him he shall have his money for it the next week. In the mean time, you have a right to be in your neighbor's debt, for this is a part of the contract. Or rather, strictly speaking, and in the sense of the text, you do not "*owe*" him till the money is due. The injunction of the text cannot be violated till the time of payment arrives. But then, you are bound by your

own promise to discharge that debt; and you are guilty of a constant violation of your own word, voluntarily pledged, while you neglect to do it. No matter what the fashion is—or how many others are equally guilty—here is a breach of promise; and whether the pledge respected a hundred thousand dollars, or a single sixpence, the principle is the same. What various injuries you may have inflicted on your neighbor, is not now the inquiry. One thing, however, is certain; in neglecting to pay that demand, you have violated your word.

Take another case. You give a note of hand, in which you "*promise*" to pay a certain sum, on a given day. In this case, you are bound, by your own word of promise, to meet the engagement with punctuality. You have no moral right to let that express contract run on, from month to month and from year to year, uncancelled, without the express consent of the other party. It is all in vain to plead the customs of society—the usages of men of business; you have passed your word, and this pledge ought to be deemed sacred as a right arm, and dear as a right eye. "What is written is written," and ought to be fulfilled to the letter. Every jot and tittle ought to be looked upon as clothed with all that is imperative in moral obligation. And the same principle may be applied to cases without number. A promise has gone out, which ought to be kept; a pledge has been given, which ought to be redeemed. You order or consent to take a Newspaper, or a Religious Periodical, and you take it with your eyes open upon the "terms;" and in the very act of ordering it, or in consenting to take it, you pledge yourself to pay for such publication *according to the terms;* and while you neglect to do this, you stand convicted, as a moral being, of violating your pledge, and withholding from another his right. I speak not now of the disastrous consequences of such solemn trifling, but I speak of its *guilt;* and of the amount of that guilt

let every candid man judge for himself. And let him decide as in the presence of God, and in prospect of the final reckoning, when it shall appear that "he who is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." The plea of inconvenience in making payments at a distance will not excuse neglect. He that fears God and respects the rights of his fellow man, will "*do justly*," even though it require a sacrifice. He will be generous rather than unjust.

2. The punctual payment of debts, *saves much time.*

In matters of business, the maxim, "*Time is money,*" is of great practical value. It is so to the merchant, the editor, the mechanic, the farmer. Time squandered, and the very prop of life is swept away. In the business transactions of the world, to save time is a golden secret; and every thing that intrenches upon this peculiar treasure, inflicts a pecuniary loss upon the community. And punctuality, or delinquency, in the payment of debts, sustains an intimate relation to this subject. This any eye can see. Much time is lost in collecting debts, especially small debts, which would be saved, and might be devoted to useful business, if men would keep their engagements. And the loss, in this case, falls just where it ought not to fall—upon the creditor, and not upon the debtor—upon the injured, and not upon the offending party. Many debts, and particularly small ones, cost more time, in their collection, than they are worth. A bill of a few dollars, or a few shillings, is presented again and again; "it shall be paid soon," and yet nothing is got but *promises*. This operation consumes much time, and imposes an unjust and oppressive tax upon the creditor, and that too, in many instances at least, in return for a real favor. Had the clerk, or apprentice, or other agent, employed in collecting small debts, applied himself diligently to business, he could, in many instances, have made more than he has been able to collect. This is enough to ruin almost any man whose bu-

siness is conducted upon a small scale, in relation to his debtors, and who, at the same time, sustains heavy responsibilities to his creditors. His stock in trade, or his labor expended upon raw materials, requires large sums, at stated periods, in order to the successful prosecution of business; and if his own time, or the time of his agents, is consumed in collecting a thousand little debts, even should he, by the mere powers of importunity, finally succeed, in this respect, he must sacrifice a large proportion of his legitimate profits. In this case, the debtor actually robs the creditor of his time; and "time," let it be repeated, "is money." Could this loss of time, incurred in running up and down the streets, or writing letters into the country, fall upon the transgressor—that is, the debtor, it would be far less a matter of regret than it is now; but even in this case, it would be a dead loss to the community which ought to be avoided, and which can be avoided, by the practice of a single Christian virtue,—*punctuality in the payment of debts.* Obedience to the text, "Owe no man any thing," would save centuries of time, in our world.

3. *It is for a man's interest,* to pay his debts with punctuality.

There are few men, and especially few men of business, who can sustain themselves, in the prosecution of their ordinary affairs, without some assistance from others. Every one needs accommodation; and, in pecuniary transactions, credit is capital. This can be acquired and sustained only by punctuality. Engagements must be considered sacred, and be kept, not only in their spirit, but in the strictness of the letter. The person whose practical maxim is, "Owe no man any thing," can often command the means which are beyond the reach of those who are far more wealthy, but less punctual than himself. Punctuality is a sure passport among men of business; an endorser

of unquestioned responsibility. But this is not all. The man who is prompt in payment, and whose word is as good as his bond, escapes a sore evil—an eating moth, which preys upon the pecuniary resources of the negligent; I mean the payment of immense sums by way of *interest.* This is the leprosy upon the means of life, which often reaches the very vitals, before the person himself is aware of the nature of the disease. Many a man has been greatly injured, in his property, by the payment of interest; and much of this might have been avoided, by the virtue of punctuality. The creditor understands, perhaps better than any other man, the plain tale of truth told by the INTEREST-TABLE; and let every man consult that commercial monitor, and adopt, in justice to himself, if from no higher motive, the sentiment of the text, as his motto—"Owe no man any thing." In addition to all this, the person who pays his debts regularly, when they become due, knows, or *may* know, just where he stands, in relation to worldly matters, and may more readily ascertain what he has to expend upon himself and family, in charity to the poor, for public improvements in society, and for the establishment of the kingdom of God in the world. He that pays his debts, as he contracts them, or when they become due—and thus keeps along even with the world—will be able to see more clearly, than any other man, the exact extent of that economy which he is called upon to practice, in order to keep his affairs from painful derangement. In whatever aspect this subject is viewed, it will be seen, that the text presents a maxim of sound policy, as well as of pure and elevated morals—uniting, as the Bible always does, our own personal good with the welfare of our neighbor.

4. *The good of the creditor,* enforces the command of the text, "Owe no man any thing."

"Love worketh no ill to his neighbor." The spirit of

true benevolence—that spirit which places another's good on a footing of equality with our own, will lead to great punctuality in paying debts. Our neighbor's interest imperiously demands it. We cannot neglect this duty, or defer it, without an injury to him; and sometimes this injury is deep and permanent—one that neither time nor money can repair.

The loss of time, in collecting debts, and especially small debts, has been already considered. In strict justice, the full value of this time ought to be paid for by him whose negligence has caused this sacrifice. But it would be well, were this the only evil sustained by the creditor. The want of punctuality is to him the source of nameless troubles in the transaction of his daily business. His credit is often seriously impaired by the remissness of others. The engagements of one man, in the mercantile or business-doing world, frequently rest upon the promises of other men, as their only basis. These engagements are such as cannot be violated, without immense injury. They respect large amounts; they stand vitally connected with a man's whole business transactions; they affect his reputation as a man, and his character as a Christian. In these responsible circumstances, he has given credit to a multitude of persons, in small amounts; and these remain unpaid, perhaps, merely because they *are* small. Promises of payment have been given and accepted, in good faith; but the kindest promises will never enable the man to whom they are made, and who looks in vain for their fulfilment, to pay his debts. "Hope deferred," in this case, as well as in others, "maketh the heart sick." In the mean time, while these small sums are withheld, and while they are greatly needed, the creditor who has depended on them and made his own solemn stipulations, on this basis, and who, as it frequently happens, is another man's debtor, in large amounts, is unable to meet his contracts, and, as a

necessary consequence, loses his credit. This injury is inflicted by the negligence of the debtor. And, in many instances, this great calamity originates in the want of attention to small debts—debts which might easily have been paid; and which would have been thought of and attended to, with punctuality, if the numerous individuals concerned, had remembered, that the ocean itself is composed of drops. Many persons are robbed of the common comforts of life, or must involve themselves in debt and all its consequent perplexities, simply by the negligence of others; who are often persons in easy circumstances of life. This is downright injustice and oppression. It is inflicting a wound without a cause—violating the law of benevolence almost without a temptation. The laboring classes, and even the poor, are often wronged in this respect. Their "hire" is "kept back by fraud." They suffer much by being compelled to wait the convenience or caprice of their more wealthy employers.

But the injury done to the purse, is not the last nor the least, on the catalogue of ills which are suffered from the want of promptitude in the payment of debts. The *moral feelings*—the deep sensibilities of the heart are intimately concerned. A man in moderate circumstances, or of small pecuniary means for the support of himself and family, and, at the same time, possessing a nice sense of honor, or what gives a still sharper point to the sting, feeling the full pressure of Christian obligation, in all his secular engagements, is often made to suffer deeply by the negligence of those with whom he is in the habit of business transactions. To say nothing of his time wasted—his credit jeoparded, his means of life diminished by that slow and wasting consumption called *interest*, he often becomes the victim of his own sensibility. His promise is out; a promise that, like the oath of God, presses upon his heart, a promise that could have been fulfilled to "the very last mite," if

others, whose promises are equally binding, were not faithless to their engagements. But a rehearsal of *his* disappointments will not pay his debts, appease his creditors, nor satisfy his own mind. Many a fine spirit is broken down and discouraged by this process. In the absence of that stimulus which is imparted to the human mind by success, and which inspires hope and impels to action, the heart faints and future effort is paralyzed. And all this mental torture—this annihilation of energy—this wreck of mind, is induced by no greater cause than the want of punctuality in the payment of small debts. For the truth of these remarks, an appeal might be made to the bitter experience of not a few in the various walks of life: to the industrious mechanic, to the shop-keeper who does business upon a small scale, to the worthy female who supports herself by the needle, to the editor or publisher of newspapers and Christian journals, to the school teacher, and to the minister of the cross.

5. The punctual payment of debts, *promotes confidence between man and man.*

Mutual confidence is the strong ligament which binds together the social compact. Society would dissolve without it. Every thing which impairs this confidence, should be avoided as the foe of social man; and every thing that enlarges its sphere, and gives strength and durability to its influence, should be cherished as the apple of the eye. The regular payment of debts, has a most happy effect upon society, in its best interests. Were this thing to be perfectly uniform, a man's word would be implicitly received, and a promise would be clothed with the authority of a bond. Credit, in these circumstances, would be established upon a sure basis. Mutual accommodations would run through all the transactions of society, and the resources of the entire body, become, in effect, the resources of each individual, for his practical benefit. Perfect confidence be-

tween man and man, would produce that state of things in which the best feelings of the heart—the spirit of benevolence—might have full scope, in conferring favors in the way of business. And if rigid punctuality were to become uniform and universal, a state of regularity and perfection might be attained, which has hitherto been considered visionary, in the affairs of men. Nothing could do so much to allay distrust, promote confidence, perfect credit, extend accommodation, and gratify the kind feelings of the heart, without the drawback of insecurity which now attends their exercise, as rigid punctuality in the payment of debts. Let this principle extend to small demands, as well as great, and the work is done. Mutual confidence would promote mutual advantage ; and the prosperity of individuals and of society would be secured. That success in business which is implied in the prompt and regular receipt of a man's just dues, be the amount large or small, would inspire hope, and hope would secure future effort.

On the other hand, disappointment produces distrust, and distrust bars the door against various indulgences which might readily be given, if promises, in money matters, could be implicitly relied upon. The heart and hand are closed, and those who are able to give credit to relieve pressure, or supply necessities, or accommodate the pecuniary circumstances of another, are unwilling to do it, because engagements, respecting the payment of debts, are so often violated. And this distrust is sometimes transferred from the business world to social life; and general confidence, the bond of compact and of intercourse, is sundered. Just so far as this state of things exists, the basis of mutual accommodation is shaken, and the purposes of our social existence are defeated. Inattention to the just demands of others—failure in meeting pecuniary engagements—contributes to this end; and

the individual who is guilty of this sin, assails, in a vital point, the interests of social man.

6. *The honor of religion,* is concerned in the payment of debts.

A promise, in business matters, whether it is made in express terms, or implied in the very nature of the case, is sacred and imposes a moral obligation. To trifle with such a promise, or to neglect attention to it, merely because it relates to secular affairs, is to set aside all moral rule, and to make religion of no practical use in the world. And yet it would seem, that the want of punctuality and the violation of engagements, are too often viewed as a mere matter of business—a kind of *professional* thing. This spirit, at least if we may judge from the fruits, extensively pervades the community, and is poisoning the fountain of moral feeling, and producing torpor in the public conscience. It is to be feared, that many good men are in some measure under its influence. They may not be aware of the fact; but, from some cause, they do not cherish a nice sense of obligation, in their engagements which relate to debts, and especially small debts. They do not intend to be dishonest, but they are negligent; and this defect in Christian character, inflicts nameless ills of which they are not fully aware. Those which fall upon the creditor, have been already recited. But the honor of Christ should be esteemed dearer than the interests or feelings of our fellow men. The gospel is designed of God to make the world better; to bring the heart under a new influence; to establish upon the very throne an efficient principle of moral action; and thus to subject the conduct to the rules of holy living. Where this effect is not produced, the gospel has not done its peculiar and appointed work. Christian principle will lead to Christian acts. The tree will produce its own fruit. We have a beautiful comment on this sentiment, in the context.—

"Render, therefore, to all their dues." "Owe no man any thing." "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law." To be a thorough Christian is to have an honest heart, and to act it out; and when *profession* is not followed up by *practice*, the gospel is dishonored, and Christ is "wounded in the house of his friends." The eagle eye of the world is upon Christians. They are more closely watched in their ordinary affairs than in their religious duties. They are estimated by their conduct. Much is expected of them, and they should honor their religion. Punctuality is a Christian virtue; and if professors of religion are deficient in this; if they break their promises and neglect to pay their debts, they bring dark reproach upon that worthy name by which they are called. They give occasion to others to say, that religion is a mere delusion, or that these men are faithless to their own solemn vows. Let the Christian's maxim be, "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another."

REMARKS.

1. *We may learn the remedy* for remissness in paying debts. Punctuality in business matters, must be placed upon its true basis; the basis of moral obligation. It is not enough to trace its influence upon a man's own credit and peace of mind; upon the pecuniary interests of the creditor; and upon the commercial affairs of society; but the payment of debts must be placed just where the Apostle Paul has placed it, in the text. It is here made a part of the moral law. It belongs to the code of relative duties, and it is enforced by the authority of God himself. It is elevated to an equality with any other Christian duty. As *prayer* is a specific branch of duty included in the great command of the law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," so "owe no man ANY *thing*," or punctuality in paying debts, is another branch of duty included

in the equally great command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Here God himself has placed the duty; and from his decision there is no appeal. If men would view the matter in this light, money transactions would be attended with much greater regularity. Many small debts would be recollected and paid before the going down of the sun, and especially before the time of evening prayer. God himself has said, "I hate robbery for burnt offering"—and "to obey is better than sacrifice." He will never accept of acts of piety to himself in the place of integrity and justice to our fellow men.

2. This subject commends itself to *young men*. The common maxim, that "punctuality is the life of business," is not more true than the remark, that it is the life of a *man of business*. If it is correct, that punctuality keeps the business of men alive, it is equally correct, that it keeps *men of business* alive. No person can succeed, in secular matters, without prompt attention to his own engagements. Delay is ruin. A moment too late, may prove as fatal to a man's prospects as the annihilation of a century. Punctuality in meeting every pecuniary obligation, should be adopted upon principle, and this principle should establish in every man, and especially in every young man, fixed and settled habits. Let him be as true to dates as the *almanac*; as punctual as the revolutions of the seasons, or the rising of the sun. It will become stock in trade to him. It will establish a reputation for him among men, and augment his means of glorifying God.

3. *We may see the unequal pressure* of a want of punctuality in paying debts. The effects of negligence, in relation to pecuniary engagements, are injurious to all concerned. Every one suffers, in some way—in body, mind, or purse, and no one receives a benefit. But it should not be forgotten, that some must sustain peculiar evils. Persons of small means, suffer most. Those whose entire

resources for carrying on their business, are scattered over the country, in one or two thousand demands of a few dollars each, can duly appreciate the virtue of punctuality, for they have learned its worth in the criminal negligence of others. There are many publishers of newspapers, and editors of literary and religious periodicals, who have hardly the means of paying for their materials and supporting themselves, whose situation in life might be made comfortable, and their usefulness greatly extended, if those who have enjoyed the fruit of their services, were honest enough to pay their small debts. Each delinquent, in such cases, should consider, that he may be inflicting a most ungrateful and cruel wound, not only upon the individual who is serving him, but indirectly, upon the best interests of the community. Teachers of academies and common schools, often suffer in the same manner. The same is true of many a mechanic, day-laborer and seamstress. They are industrious, and if others were punctual, it would save them many anxious moments, and sometimes, many bitter tears. Ministers of the gospel, from their peculiar situation respecting money matters, suffer as much, from the want of punctuality, as any other class of men. Their means are limited, and if these are not promptly furnished, they have no alternative but to contract debts, and sometimes forfeit their word and lose their credit. These things ought not so to be. This, in all the above cases and many others, is "*grinding* the face of the poor." It is refusing to "bear the infirmities of the weak." "I speak to wise men, judge ye what I say."

4. It is morally right *to compel men to pay their debts.* The compulsory process of law, should always be avoided, when practicable, and should be adopted only as the last resort. But it would be a real blessing to the community to be disciplined into punctuality, even by the rod of the law, when other and gentler means have failed. It has a

bad effect, in many ways, that a multitude of small debts are never paid. It is not only unjust to the creditor, but it is a moral injury to the debtor and the community. It introduces confusion into the business world, lowers the standard of integrity, and sears the conscience. The same loose system of morals, if suffered to pass, extends to other subjects and diffuses its influence through the body politic. Such a state as this, is far more to be deprecated than the rigid execution of law upon delinquent debtors. If their neglect is not voluntary, let mercy reign. Its influence is like the dew of heaven. It is an attribute, bright in God and lovely in man. In our world, it is greatly needed; and here let it exist and triumph. But "the lawless and disobedient" may, with propriety, be compelled to do justice to others, and pay their debts. The apostle who wrote the precept, "Owe no man any thing," informs us, that the law was made for such. Indeed both law and gospel enforce the injunction of the text, by the authority of God and the solemn sanctions of eternity.

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SERMON CCXXXVIII.

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THE GOODNESS OF GOD FITTED TO LEAD MEN TO REPENTANCE.

Romans, ii. 4. *Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?*

The same fire that softens wax, hardens clay; the same sun, that warms and fertilizes the earth and clothes its fields with verdure, exhales from its marshes and fens the noxious vapors, which poison the air and produce contagion, disease, and death. In like manner, the same goodness of God that wakens to ecstacy the joys of heaven, and fills every heart, around the throne, with love and praise, hardens the impenitent in their sins, and forms them vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. These different effects are not owing to any difference in the nature of the cause which produces them, but to the nature of the subjects on which that cause operates. The element of heat is simple; and the rays of the sun, though diversified, are so harmoniously blended, that they always produce, in any given case, precisely the same effects. So the goodness of God, simple in its nature and uniform in all its operations, tends directly, in its natural, unperverted influence on moral agents, to conform them to the divine image and to make them holy and happy. This is its design, this its natural tendency. But by perversion and abuse, this same goodness may be made to produce effects entirely the opposite of these. It may stupify, and harden, and destroy the very persons, whom, if its proper design and tendency had not been resisted, it would have led to repentance, and prepared for heaven.

The text is a solemn expostulation addressed to those who are guilty of thus perverting the goodness of God. "Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"

The object of the present discourse is to show, that the goodness of God is fitted and intended to lead sinners to repentance. Let it be observed then,—

1. There is much, in the very nature of divine goodness, which is fitted to produce this effect. It lays all intelligent creatures under everlasting obligations to God, the great Author of their being, and of their mercies. It shows

also, in a very strong light, the exceeding sinfulness of sin, as an offence against the greatest and best of beings, our Father and our God; and while, in its long suffering and forbearance, it gives assurance of his readiness to pardon all the penitent, it appeals in the most direct and powerful manner to all the faculties and feelings of the soul. The language of divine goodness to every sinner, is,—What provocation hast thou, that thou shouldst cast off the service of thy God, and refuse to hearken to his voice of love and salvation? Is he not thy Father, the Author of thy being, and the giver of thy blessings? Is it not he that has kept thee alive till this hour; that has fed and clothed and blessed thee ever since thou hast had a being, and is even now, after all thy ingratitude, waiting to welcome thy return to his love, and to make thee partaker of the eternal joys of his kingdom? Why dost thou then yet sin against thy God, and turn a deaf ear to his calls of mercy? Has he been a wilderness unto thee; a land of darkness; a hard master? Look abroad upon the works of this all-wise and benevolent God, and see how all things proclaim his goodness and show forth his glory, and unite in calling thee to duty and heaven: and hast thou a heart to resist the claims of his infinite love, and still go on in thy sins? The whole creation, beaming forth the brightness of his perfections and the glories of his name, is one constant admonition to the impenitent of their *unreasonableness* and guilt. Thou canst look no where, without meeting demonstrations of the loving kindness and tender mercy of God; and every fresh manifestation of love is a new argument to enforce the duty of immediate and entire submission to his will.

In this manner does the goodness of God make its appeal to the heart, and urge us, one and all, to repent and live. It appeals to our reason, and the verdict is, that to sin against such a Being is a deep debasement of our nature, and a most guilty perversion of the noble faculties with which he has endued us. It appeals to our sense of duty; and the verdict is, that no obligation is so strong as that which binds us to Jehovah, our God, and no guilt so great, as that of violating such obligation, and refusing to repent. It appeals to our gratitude, and the verdict is, that to slight such goodness, as God is daily manifesting, indicates a heart dead to every generous emotion. It appeals to our hopes and fears; and the verdict is, that no good can be secured so great, as that which flows from repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ; and no evil incurred so tremendous, as that which must result from continued impenitence and rejection of offered mercy. These appeals, addressed by infinite goodness to all the sensibilities of the heart, constitute a motive to repentance the most powerful of which we can form any conception.

No appeal, we are sensible, can be made to a disobedient child so tender and moving as that which springs from the kindness of a parent's heart. Go to such a child and tell him, there is no just cause for the ill temper he is indulging; tell him that the parent against whom he is rebelling feels towards him only the spirit of kindness and love, and is even now longing to welcome back to his bosom this one of his family, who has done so much to alienate his affections; and if the appeal does not reach the heart, and cause him to return *to duty, you* feel at once that no motives can reach his case. He is hardened *beyond the power of* persuasion. But what is the goodness of the kindest

earthly parent, compared with the goodness of Him who is the Father of us all? His very nature is love, is goodness; and that goodness, in all its riches and forbearance and long suffering, is incessantly poured upon the heart of rebellious man to lead him to repentance.

There is too a peculiarity in the *mode* in which divine goodness flows to guilty man, which adds inexpressibly to its tender and persuasive energy. It is not goodness flowing to innocent beings through the unobstructed channels of benevolence; but goodness, flowing to lost sinners through the mediation of the Son of God; it is goodness purchased with blood; goodness pressing its suit and pleading for the life of your souls, by the love of the eternal Father, by the compassion of a bleeding Savior, by the deep sorrows of the garden, and the deeper agonies of the cross. Here is goodness such as was never manifested in any world but ours, nor towards any other beings but the lost children of men. No wonder that angels desire to look into this new discovery of the divine benevolence; no wonder that they rejoice to witness its triumphs in the salvation of repenting sinners; the only wonder is that all on earth are not melted and subdued by it, and brought to adore and love that goodness which moved God to give his Son to die for our lost world.

2. The goodness of God is fitted to lead sinners to repentance, as it secures for them a respite from punishment and gives them a space for repentance. This is expressly assigned in the Bible as the reason why God spares sinners in this world of mercy, and follows them with his calls of love. He waits to be gracious, is long suffering towards them, because he is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Why else does God prolong the lives of those who daily trample on his authority and despise his goodness? He is able to punish them, and they deserve to be punished. If every sinner were immediately to be cut off from hope, and have executed upon him the penalty of the violated law, God would be just, and a holy universe would approve his conduct. And yet he bears long with the ungrateful despisers of his grace; year after year, he keeps back the stroke of justice, lengthens out their probation and follows them still with the offers of pardon—all the fruit of unmerited goodness, and all to give them a space for repentance. And what motive to repentance more persuasive than this forbearance of a long suffering and gracious God towards those who requite him only evil for good? It shows not only that he is willing, but earnestly desirous that the sinner should turn and live. Every hour and minute is a fresh respite from deserved punishment, and a fresh call to repentance and salvation. Every evening and morning, as you lie down and rise up, as you go out and come in, the divine goodness meets you with a renewed reprieve from your Sovereign and with renewed offers of pardon and eternal life. Every Sabbath, as its sacred light dawns, invites you to the sanctuary, repeats the calls to repentance, and enforces those calls by assurances that God is still waiting to be gracious, and ready to pardon and save all who turn unto him.

3. The goodness of God leads to repentance, as it has opened a way in which repentance is available to secure pardon and life for the chief of sinners. If the Lord Jesus Christ had not interposed in our behalf, and by his sufferings and death in our stead, opened a way whereby God can be just and yet justify him that believeth in Jesus, the unwelcome call to repentance had

never fallen upon the ear of reluctant sinners, but every rebel had been left to perpetual impenitence and to its endless punishment. But now, in Christ Jesus, God is reconciling the world unto himself. In his eternal and infinite goodness, he so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life. On the broad ground of an atonement, thus made for the sins of the world, all are invited to come unto God; and though burdened with guilt deep as that of Manasseh or Saul of Tarsus, they have assurance, that, coming penitent and believing, they shall obtain mercy and everlasting salvation. The condition of pardon now is, not that you present a perfect righteousness, of your own, not that you work out an atonement for your sins, or merit forgiveness by doings of your own, but that you repent and look unto God for mercy through Jesus Christ. And what motive to repentance stronger than this? The doors of your prison house are thrown open, every obstacle to your coming forth is taken out of the way, and God in mercy meets you with his calls of love and bids you welcome, on condition of repentance, to all the privileges and hopes of his children. No past sins form any barrier in the way of your access to God. His goodness, manifested in the gift of his Son, has broken down every wall of separation, and bids you, however poor, helpless, and guilty, to come boldly to the throne, that you may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. It is, as if divine goodness, taking you by the hand and leading you aside, should say,—Come now and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. Behold the door of mercy set open before you, and God waiting to hear the first sigh of repentance, that he may pour into your bosom the joys of his salvation. No depth of guilt need exclude you from his favor. With him is plenteous redemption. It is only to look and live. O, admire the patience, adore the love, and accept the mercy of your long suffering God. Arise and go to your Father; and while yet afar off, he will meet you with his love and restore you to all the privileges of his blessed family. I add,

4. That the goodness of God is fitted to lead sinners to repentance, as it furnishes the best possible means of repentance and the most powerful motives to this duty. Some of these have already been mentioned; but they demand, in this place, a more distinct consideration. What but a means of bringing you to repentance is that direct and solemn appeal which the goodness of God is constantly making to all the sensibilities and faculties of the soul? What but a means of repentance is that forbearance and long suffering of God which holds back the stroke of justice and prolongs your existence in this world of hope and salvation? And what but a means to the same end is that love of God which gave his Son to die for you, and now extends to you the offer of a free and full pardon, on the one condition that you confess your transgressions and be sorry for your sins?

But let us notice some other means and motives which God in his goodness has furnished for the same great end.

Consider then the ample and impressive instruction poured around you *from the* word, the providence and the works of God. All these conspire to *impress on your mind* the same lessons of eternal wisdom and love. They

unfold to your view the perfections and ways of the great Eternal; they make you acquainted with his law and gospel, with your own character, and state and prospects as sinners, and with the terms on which alone you can obtain the pardoning mercy of God. The books of creation, of providence and revelation lie spread out before you, inscribed by the hand-writing of Heaven, and designed to guide you to immortal life. Each illustrates and confirms the other, and all unite in pressing upon you the duty of making the eternal God your friend and of seeking for yourself the endless happiness of his kingdom.

Notice next the invitations of divine goodness. These meet the eye on almost every page of the inspired word; and coming as they do from the lips of eternal love, it would seem as if they must avail to melt every heart that is not a heart of stone. Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Look unto me and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth. Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.

To give the more effect to these calls of heavenly mercy, the Bible abounds with the most alarming warnings to those who go on still in their trespasses. If I whet my glittering sword and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies and will reward them that hate me. He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck shall suddenly be destroyed and that without remedy. Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand and no man regarded it; but ye have set at naught all my counsel, and would none of my reproof, I also will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh.

Turn next to the promises which divine goodness has made to those that repent—promises of pardon, of grace and eternal glory—pardon for the deepest guilt; grace to sanctify, to sustain, to comfort and bless with all needed good, in this life and forever; eternal glory, too, in the presence of God and the Lamb; joys which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, the sure inheritance of all that repent and turn unto the Lord. Nor does the goodness of God stop here. It lifts the covering from the pit of wo, and shows you the awful punishments prepared for them who make light of proffered mercy. It is divine goodness, I say, which makes this discovery and warns you of the coming wrath. The voice of warning may perhaps fall an unwelcome sound on the ear, but it is the voice of compassion, telling you of danger and urging your flight. The most awful threatenings of the Bible bespeak the goodness of God, not less really than his kindest promises. The object in both cases is the same; to bring you to obedience and secure your salvation. "God waves the rod, because he is unwilling to strike." The wrath denounced is wrath to come. It lingers long, and signals of its approach are held out that you may take the alarm and flee to the ark of safety. It is mercy that now speaks to you of hell; it is justice that will hereafter inflict its dreadful torments on those whom mercy could not reclaim from the ways of sin and death. The warnings of hell are to turn you back from the path that leads thither; you are bidden to look to its dark regions and formidable fires, that you go not yourself to that place of torment.

Such then being the design and tendency of the goodness of God, let us inquire, in conclusion, what are its actual effects.

(1.) All the true friends of God feel the constraining power of his goodness; and by it, are made penitent, believing and thankful. When they reflect upon the manifestations of divine goodness towards them and a lost world; how patiently God has borne with them amid their provocations and sins; how he gave his Son to die for them, and has called them from being heirs of death to be heirs of glory; they are humbled in the dust in view of the great mercy bestowed on such miserable sinners; and with heartfelt gratitude to the Author of all good, they exclaim with the Psalmist,—What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? This, my brethren, is the feeling of your hearts, if you have indeed tasted that the Lord is good and gracious. It is a feeling of mingled penitence and love; of humility and gratitude; and the effect is to draw you near to God in holy affection and to bind you forever to his throne and service. Cultivate and strengthen that feeling, my brethren; it is a feeling naturally inspired by the goodness of God, and well becoming sinners redeemed from death and hell by his grace, and made heirs of immortal life. And remember, if divine goodness has already done so much for you, it will do more; if it has begun to save, it will carry on the work unto perfection; and if you have begun to feel the melting and subduing power of of that goodness here, you will feel more hereafter, and finally praise God forever for his redeeming love and sanctifying grace.

(2.) There is another class of persons whom the goodness of God appears to leave wholly unaffected and unmoved. Of this class I fear there are not a few among ourselves. What impression, let me ask, has the goodness of God made on the minds of some of my hearers? To say that it has not led them to repentance is to say only what they confess to be true, and what indeed is apparent to all. Has it even attracted their attention or drawn from them any direct, grateful recognition of the hand that has sustained and blessed them all their days? God, my friends, has been doing you good ever since you have been in the world; he watched over your helpless infancy, protected your youth, and crowned your riper years with innumerable blessings; his mercies have been new to you every morning and fresh every evening; great has been his goodness towards you. What returns now have you made to him your great Creator and Benefactor? Have you felt your ever growing obligations; have you traced your enjoyments to his munificent hand; realized your blessings to be so many calls to repentance; and by them have you been made humble, thankful, obedient? If some of you can answer in the affirmative, must not others of you confess here before God, that on you lies the sin of having despised the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering? Has not that goodness fallen upon your heart as rain upon a rock, without impression and without fruit? Look back to the past week, and consider how you began and closed each one of its days;—you rose in the morning without thinking of God your preserver; you went about the business of the day without any practical sense of his presence; and you laid down at night without any thankful recognition of the goodness that had watched about your path, preserved you in your going out and coming in, and caused your cup to overflow with blessings. So you spent the last week; every day found and left you unthankful,—casting off fear and restraining prayer before *God; and is not this* a fair specimen of the manner in which you have spent

the whole of past life? Has not each day and month and year, as it has come to you loaded with God's goodness, found and left you impenitent and prayerless? never seriously thinking of the great design of God in his long suffering and kindness towards you; scarcely admitting perhaps that you are a sinner, and never coming before your Maker and Judge humbly confessing your sin and seeking his pardoning mercy. Sustained and blessed every hour and moment of your being, by the care and kindness of a God, always waiting to be gracious, always calling you to repentance, always proffering you the treasures of his grace and the joys of his kingdom,—and all this without any grateful sense, on your part, of the mercies you are receiving, and without any influence to melt you into contrition, or bring you, penitent and thankful, to acknowledge God as the Author of your being and of your mercies. O hard, insensible heart! unaffected, unmoved by all the riches of God's goodness; what can melt and subdue thee?—proof against all the riches of heavenly mercy.

(3.) There is another class who take encouragement from the goodness of God to sin against him even with a bolder and more unrelenting hand. This is emphatically to despise the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering, and it involves the deepest guilt of which man is capable. God spares the guilty that they may have a space for repentance, and they employ the respite given them to multiply their provocations and heap new insults upon the divine Majesty. Because God is slow to punish, they conclude he never will punish. Because he waits to be gracious, they turn his patience into an occasion of sin. Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Are none of my hearers chargeable with this abuse of divine goodness? Why is it, let me ask, that you defer from day to day and from year to year the great work of repentance? Is it not because you presume the goodness and forbearance and long suffering of God will yet be continued towards you? God, you say, is a merciful God; he is long suffering and abundant in goodness; full of mercies and loving kindnesses, and has no pleasure in the death of sinners. True; his mercy is boundless; great beyond what eye hath seen, or ear heard, or the heart of man conceived. It has provided salvation for a lost world; it has followed you with the offer of it all your days; and is waiting now, in much patience and kindness, that you turn and live. What then? Why, I will abuse that mercy; I will weary that long suffering; I will despise that goodness which I am experiencing from the hand of my God, and go on to sin against him my Creator, Redeemer, Benefactor and Friend. Does such a purpose, expressed in words shock your feelings? But is expressing a purpose in words worse than cherishing it in the heart and acting it out in the life? Go, impenitent, prayerless man, as you retire from the sanctuary, go alone into your chamber, and there before God express in language the feelings of your heart, and the conduct of your life. Lord, thou art good, and compassionate and long suffering; and therefore I am encouraged to cast off fear and restrain prayer before thee. Thou waitest with much patience and forbearance that sinners may turn and live; I will therefore go on in my sins, delay still the work of repentance, and cast from me thy fear and service. Thou hast hitherto followed me with thy lovin

kindness and tender mercy; I will therefore live, in time to come as in time past, neglecting the duties thou requirest of me, and seeking only my own selfish interests. You tremble and turn pale at the thought of uttering, with your lips, such language before God. But what else is the language of the heart and life of every impenitent sinner; who, because God is good and does not come forth to execute punishment speedily, delays repentance and presumes to go on still in his trespasses? Dear hearer, look at this case, and see whether it is not yours. Is it not presumption on the goodness of God, that makes you so inattentive to his calls; so secure in your sins, so ready to put off repentance to a future period? It must be added,

(4.) That those who continue to abuse the riches of God's goodness will finally perish with an aggravated condemnation. This, we at once perceive, is just; and the Scriptures make it certain. Great as the patience of God is, a time is coming when it will give place to wrath. And this wrath will be the more terrible for the rich mercy that preceded it. When patience has performed her appointed work, she will retire from the scene and justice will ascend the throne and triumph in the destruction of those who would not yield to mercy. Sinners who despise and abuse the riches of divine goodness, will soon have passed the appointed limit of forbearance; and then the treasures of wrath which they were laying up for themselves, while in the state of merciful probation, will kindle into unquenchable fire, and consume them with everlasting destruction. Mark the connection of the text.—Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and long suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance; but after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God? There is then a treasury of wrath, for despisers of divine goodness; and day by day, and hour by hour, impenitent men, you are casting into it. When will your cup be full? When will you have reached the utmost limit of divine forbearance? Who shall say whether you are not now treading that limit, and that, deferring repentance beyond this hour, you shall not be cut down in your sins and your doom sealed forever? It is indeed a high privilege to live in the midst of the goodness which distinguishes your lot. But there is a responsibility connected with it which may well make you tremble. It will be dreadful to perish in any case; but most dreadful of all to perish amid light and privilege; amid the displays of divine goodness and the means and mercies which were fitted and designed to bring to repentance and salvation. Others hear the voice of God and turn to him and live. Let his goodness lead you also to repentance; let his patience and long suffering draw you to his throne, in penitence and faith, and bind you forever to his service and kingdom. This is right, is good, is happy. But the opposite of it is sin, is misery, is everlasting death. You cannot neglect or despise the goodness of God, but with infinite guilt. If it does not bring you to repentance, it will harden you in impenitence; if it does not bring you to God and prepare you for heaven, it must exclude you from God and fit you for an awful condemnation.

SERMON CCXXXIX.

By Rev. AUSTIN DICKINSON, New-York.

THE DAY OF JUDGMENT:
OR
FINAL APPEAL TO THE IMPENITENT.

Psalm i. 5, *The ungodly shall not stand in the judgment.*

When an important case is about to be decided in a court of justice, it is deemed no mark of enthusiasm to appear specially interested. If the case involve the life of a valued friend, or if even a very large amount of property is depending, it is natural, it is reasonable, to inquire how the trial is likely to terminate. And it would indicate madness, or at least very gross insensibility, if the individual whose life, or all whose property was at stake, should be entirely thoughtless in regard to his trial. If then God has appointed a great day of decision—a day for settling the destinies of every individual in bliss or wo, according to his character—how solemnly interesting must that day be; and how reasonable, how suitable, that we inquire now, whether we are prepared to stand the trial.

The Judge himself has assured us, that "*the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment:*" and among the ungodly he includes all who remain unreconciled through the blood of the Lamb. If then you have sinned and remain impenitent, the warning is to you: you can not stand the last trial, but must meet a dreadful overthrow. To the candid mind, this certainty of the sinner's overthrow is now capable of perfect demonstration.

1. None will deny that THE LAW OF GOD, which is holy, just and good, explicitly condemns the sinner, and consigns him to the second death. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." "He that offends in one point, is guilty of all." And "not one jot or tittle shall pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." By the *law*, therefore, no sinner can be justified. And it contains no provision for pardon. On this ground, then, the sinner can never stand in the judgment.

2. He will not be able to stand the last trial, because ALL THE WITNESSES WILL BE AGAINST HIM.

His *companions in sin* will testify against him. Sinners, in this world, not unfrequently encourage one another in transgression; and if one is arrested, and brought to trial, his fellows in transgression sometimes swear falsely to save him from condemnation. But at the tribunal of God, every mouth that would justify sin will be stopped. The false swearer, the liar, will feel it utterly impossible to evade Omniscience. Thus every sinner will feel constrained to bear witness to the truth, even though it operate to condemn his nearest companions. Thus every wicked plot, every abomination in which they may have encouraged one another, will be openly exposed to their "*shame and everlasting contempt.*"

Again, the *examples of the righteous* will testify against the impenitent

It will be in vain for sinners there to plead, as they sometimes do here, that they could not help continuing in sin; that they were urged on by a fatal necessity; that they were urged on by the violence of natural inclination. For the examples of the righteous will testify, that others, who were once of like dispositions and in like circumstances, have repented, have broken off their iniquities by turning unto the Lord. At the tribunal of Heaven, the example and condition of the righteous will testify, that *they* only were wise, and that all the impenitent were *fools*. That "*madness* was in their *heart* while they lived." And the example of the wise, instead of provoking a smile of pity or contempt, will only pour eternal shame on all the finally impenitent.

Again, the sinner's own *awakened conscience and memory* will testify against him in that day. Conscience may now slumber in perfect insensibility. The sinner may put far away the evil day, and impiously say, "Where is the promise of his coming? What profit shall we have if we pray unto him?" But far different will be his reflections on *another* day. For when the slumbers of death are broken, and the terrors of the last judgment burst upon the view—then too will the slumbers of conscience be effectually broken, and a long chain of condemning recollections rush on the mind. Then will it be recollected, how, in early life, or riper years, the affecting sounds of death, judgment and eternity did ring on the ear, thrill the soul, agitate the heart, and almost persuade you to be a Christian. But conscience will then testify, how you slighted the monition, resisted the truth, and grieved the Holy Spirit. Memory too will on that day be amazingly quickened. Then every act or thought of injustice to man, or dishonor to God—all the millions of your now forgotten sins, of thought, word and deed, will come up in terrible array before you. Oh, what an immense, dark, thick cloud, to break at once in thunder on the conscience! And will not conscience be roused to fury, and declare you verily guilty, when God shall thus "bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing?" But,

Again, the *sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ* will testify against the wicked at the day of judgment. That same Jesus who hung on the cross, will then fill the throne. But, O how changed! That countenance, once marred, now glorious as ten thousand suns shining in their strength. His appearance will then say with emphasis, to such as now slight his offered grace, *These arms were once extended for your salvation—for sinners like you, this head was crowned with thorns—this body and soul bore the tremendous weight of a world's redemption.* And this exhibition will be as vivid lightning to the sinner's eye. It will furnish overwhelming proof of his ingratitude and guilt, whom such love could not melt.

All the *instructions* of Christ will also testify against the sinner in the last judgment. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; *the word that I have spoken*, the same shall judge him in the last day." Yes, these glorious truths of the Savior will be as noon-day splendors, to render the ingratitude and wickedness of the wicked the more manifest—their perseverance in sin perfectly inexcusable—and their damnation just.

And now, with such overwhelming variety of evidence against the sinner, *and no witness whatever in his* behalf, how manifest the certainty that he can

not stand the dread trial! But this certainty is still more manifest, if possible, from several other considerations.

3. Consider then next, THE ETERNAL JUDGE WILL BE INFLEXIBLY STRICT IN INTERPRETING AND UPHOLDING THE LAW. The omniscient Judge understands those laws which Himself has made. And he can not but have an unchanging veneration for them in all their strictness and purity: for he is the unchanging God. And from his book of remembrance, he can compare distinctly the life and heart of every man with what is written in the book of his statutes. And when this great God shall exhibit the infinite purity of his Law, and contrast it with the sinner's vileness,—then the poor wretch, if he have no Savior to plead for him, must feel that he is indeed undone for ever—that it is utterly impossible to stand such a trial. But,

4. The impenitent sinner at God's bar WILL HAVE NO ADVOCATE. At a human tribunal, when the culprit is arraigned, though his case appear exceedingly bad—though all the witnesses be against him, and the Judge inflexibly strict—still he sometimes cherishes hope, from the ingenuity and eloquence of his advocate. But for the impenitent at Jehovah's bar no advocate will be found. Not one of his boldest companions in sin will venture a syllable in his defence; not one of those foul spirits of darkness who may have seduced him with lies, will now *care* for his safety; not one of the bright and generous millions who encircle the throne will *have a heart* to palliate his guilt. And having slighted the mediation of Christ, he can have no part in *his* mercy. Every impenitent sinner, therefore, on that day must bear his own burden. He must hear the condemning witnesses, the eternal law, the irreversible sentence, without any advocate whatever in his behalf. How then can he stand the trial?

5. *Finally;* to make his case perfectly hopeless, let it be remembered, that ALL WHO ARE TO CO-OPERATE IN HIS TRIAL, WILL BE HOLY AND UPRIGHT BEINGS. "Know ye not that the *saints* shall judge the world?" Yes, these happy spirits, themselves "washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb," and admitted to share his glory, will then look on the wicked who have despised his mercy, just as they appear "in the light of God's countenance," amid the splendors of the "great white throne;" and in such circumstances they cannot but acquiesce in the sanctions of the infinitely holy law. Their part will then be, with Christ, to judge and condemn; and not as now, to entreat, and suffer wrong. Men of eminent piety and moral worth are sometimes most cruelly treated in this world. Wealth and power and intrigue may here succeed in a bad cause. Yes,

> "In the corrupted currents of *this* world
> Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice;
> And oft 'tis seen, the wicked prize itself
> Buys out the law: but 'tis not so *above:*
> *There* is no shuffling."

For Heaven has declared, of all the proud, of all the unjust, yea, of all that do wickedly, "Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them, and the upright *shall have dominion over them in the morning.*" And again, "To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people, to bind their kings with chains and their nobles with fetters of iron *to execute* upon them the judgment written, this honor have all his saints

If then wicked kings and nobles shall fall under the condemnation of the saints, when with Christ they shall judge the world, where is the impenitent man that can stand the trial?

O sinner! when all the witnesses shall be against you; when your Judge shall be inflexibly strict; and no kind advocate shall appear for you; and all the jurors shall be perfectly holy: can thy heart endure, or thy hands be strong, when God shall deal with thee? Ah, no! Every angel of light would say, *No;* every man in his right mind must say, *No:* this controversy is with *Omnipotence,* and God is right and you are wrong, and there is no possibility of standing, when "the great day of his wrath is come."

What then is the grand inference from this subject? Why, every man in his right mind must say—what the Savior himself hath kindly and earnestly said—"*Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him.*"

Hearken, then, sinner, to the advice of infinite wisdom. Settle at once this awful controversy. Have the courage, have the honesty, have the magnanimity to confess before men and angels, that God is right and that you are wrong. Fly to the only Savior, to the all-prevailing Intercessor. Accept his offered mediation, and be at peace. For it is madness, inexpressible madness, as well as guilt, to remain unreconciled to God, and brave the eternal judgment, without an advocate, without one favoring witness, with no friend on the throne, nor one pitying saint or angel among all the millions who attend the trial.

As a rational being, you know that in such circumstances you must inevitably fall. "*The ungodly shall not stand.*" And recollect, from that fall there is no recovery. It settles your destiny forever, *forever,* FOREVER. Then "he that is unjust let him be unjust still." And Oh! eternity, eternity, eternity! how long and dreary must be the period, spent in "weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth," under a full conviction of deserved wrath! Think, O my soul, think before it be too late, what it is to be abandoned by the infinite Redeemer and Judge, and lie forever under the "power of his anger!" Think of the dread amount of misery that must be endured by an incorrigible enemy of God, *increasing forever in guilt and remorse!* Think of the extent of eternity! Oh! send an angel forward on the awful deep, with the speed of lightning, for millions on millions of centuries, and the dread waves of perdition are still rising and rolling eternally beyond!

Fellow sinner, in view of these considerations, what will you now do? "The prudent man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself, but the simple pass on and are punished." "If thou be wise, thou shalt be wise for thyself, but if thou scornest, thou alone shalt bear it." "Be wise now therefore. Be instructed. Serve the Lord with fear. Rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son lest he be angry, and thou perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little." For "*who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger?*"

END OF VOL. XI.

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Jonathan Edwards

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If you doubt a future state, tell me, for what end were the human race created? For *happiness?* this none attains to the extent of his capacity in the present life, and many are wretched from the cradle to

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SERMON CCXL.

BY EDWARD D. GRIFFIN, D. D.

THE WORTH OF THE SOUL.

Mat. xvi. 26.—*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*

There is in man an immaterial soul, distinct from the clay which composes his body; a spiritual substance that thinks and reasons, chooses and refuses, loves and hates; and this conscious being, not depending for its existence on the body, will survive in a separate state when the body shall be dissolved. Reason assents to this when it is discovered; and although reason could not have made the discovery, yet the separate existence of the soul is clearly revealed in that Gospel which has brought life and immortality to light. Every believer in revelation must, therefore, perceive it to be the chief interest of man to secure the happiness of his soul in a future and eternal state. And those who believe in the necessity of a change of heart and of a thorough religion, will not deny that there is a lamentable and surprising degree of inattention to the soul among the greater part of mankind; an inattention which, where it continues, must prove eternally fatal. Such will not impute it to severity, if the ministers of the Gospel, with the most heart-felt solicitude, endeavor to awaken their brethren, their flesh and blood, from such a destructive lethargy. The most impassioned calls will not be deemed too vehement in such a cause.

I cannot hope, my dear hearers, to speak to you with effect, unless you firmly believe in an eternity of rewards and punishments. If this be denied, I shall not carry you along with me as I pursue the subject. And because I may have to break company with some here whom I would not leave behind, I will stop a little and plead with them. God grant that it be not a parting leave.

If you doubt a future state, tell me, for what end were the human race created? For *happiness?* this none attains to the extent of his capacity in the present life, and many are wretched from the cradle to

the grave. For *the glory of God?* this end is not answered if there be no future state: for here virtue is often oppressed while vice triumphs. Without a state of more equal rewards and punishments, the human race would bring a reproach on the righteous Governor of the world. And consider, I pray you, that you cannot bring a future state into doubt until you have destroyed the evidence on which divine revelation rests;—the testimony of miracles and prophecies,—the standing testimony of the Jewish nation,—the evidence derived from the unity of design, the holy precepts, and all the vestiges of divinity impressed on the sacred pages; a task which the wisest and best men would die before they would attempt, and which the subtlest enemies of revelation have never been able to accomplish. To risk your immortal all on the performance of such a task! how much better to risk it on the blood of the Lamb of God. Do you believe in a future *state*, but not future *punishment?* still the things of eternity and not the world ought to engross your chief attention. Animating prospects of *worldly* good can prevail to draw your attention from the present moment; how much more should a prospect of immortal happiness? Are you sincere in believing yourselves the heirs of the eternal glories of heaven, and yet so seldom think of futurity, and so deeply affected with the trifles, the joys and disappointments of a moment? Perhaps you believe in *future* but not in *eternal* punishment. Well, what would it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul *for ages of ages* in hell? To avoid one year's imprisonment on earth, you would do and suffer much. To escape then this dreadful punishment after death, (even if it be not endless,) with what anxiety ought you to examine the conditions of pardon, your own character, and labor to make your peace with God. Or have you the unnatural cruelty to disinherit your future selves of all affection, and having followed yourselves with concern through every period to the grave, to bury there with your bodies all self-regard? Know ye, my beloved friends, that your future selves will be these same conscious beings whose sensations are so interesting to you at present? These same minds, with the same personal consciousness, will be in heaven or hell. But if you will not be persuaded, I will turn to others who do believe in all the realities of a future state which the Scriptures disclose. To you, my more hopeful hearers, I say, "What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" That *you* should want persuasion to value the salvation of the soul above the present world, is among those wonders which want a name. What can be the cause of this? Doubtless the more remote cause is simple aversion to God and divine things; but the proximate cause is worldly attachment and care. The profits, pleasures, and honors of the present life so fill the eye, that the true interest of the soul is not discerned. Were all these things away, the mind, ever restless in pursuit of something, would more readily bend forward to investigate eternal objects. Suffer me

then to resist these dangerous seducers by urging the solemn aphorism of Him who knew the value of the soul: "What is a man profited it he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

The superior value of the soul will appear from the following considerations:

I. From its *essence and capacities.* The body is composed of dust, like the bodies of other animals. All the treasures of the world are made of dust. But the soul was infused by the breath of God. While the body is fitted for the lower animal functions, and governed by laws common to the animal tribes, the soul is endowed with the moral faculty, which renders it the subject of the dignified and awful government of Jehovah. It is aggrandised with capacities to serve and glorify God, to be useful to men, to relieve the afflicted, and to manage the concerns of nations. It is capable of the heavenly exercises of love, pity, and mercy. The *extent* of its capacities is amazing. What numberless and surprising inventions for the benefit and ornament of society has it made; what progress in the knowledge of the arts and sciences—in exploring the secrets of the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms. It has searched out the bowels of the earth. It has wandered among the stars to calculate their laws and order. It has followed the comets in their immense excursions. It has been found capacious enough to take in the contemplation of world upon world, and system upon system, spread through the regions of boundless space. Its motions are so rapid that it can rove from star to star, and from world to world, in a moment. No fetters can bind it, no bounds contain it. It is capable of exerting itself like an angel in the employments of the heavenly world; contemplating God, expatiating through his works, and assisting in the anthems of celestial worship. That such a stupendous emanation of divinity should be thrown into ruins—the use of all these godlike faculties be worse than lost, and forever devoted to malice and blasphemy,—so much would not be lost should the *material universe* fall into one general wreck.

Vast capacities has the soul for *happiness* and *misery.* I appeal to those who are acquainted with the pleasures and pains of the mind. No delights which depend on the senses can compare with the serene pleasures of a contented soul, much less with the raptures of a transported soul. And no pains which the body feels can equal the agonies of a troubled spirit. The capacity of the soul for happiness and misery will be greatly enlarged at death. It will then be an angel in bliss or a devil in misery;—rapt in pleasures which no mortal heart can conceive, or laboring with throes and agonies which the imaginations of this infant world are too feeble to paint.

The happiness which appertains to the soul is far the most noble in its *kind.* How diminutive is the happiness, (if it be worthy of the name,) that can be gathered from the briers and brambles of this wil-

derness. What are the pleasures of sense, but the *half-enjoyed* pleasures of the brute? What are the pleasures of imagination, but utopian visions? What the pleasures of honor, but palpitating pains? What the pleasures of riches, but the morose perplexities of care? What are the pleasures of friendship, but pleasures of the *soul*? Nothing is worthy of the name of happiness but that which has its seat peculiarly in the mind. And then how sublime is intellectual delight. In contemplating the dignified happiness of a Newton or a Franklin, we are awed into reverence, and assent that intellectual bliss rises high and out of sight of the low pleasures of the epicure, and feel an instinctive conviction that such happiness ennobles and exalts. But if the happiness of the *philosopher* so far transcends, what does the happiness of the *Christian*? If to contemplate the sun and moon produces a delight full of dignity, what does the contemplation of Him who spoke these orbs into being? The soul alone is capable of enjoying God; and the small portion of this delight which is allotted to Christians here, is by far the most sublime happiness of the present life. But who can conceive the bliss, the dignified and God-like bliss, which their souls will enjoy in heaven! having free access to the infinite God,—diving into the ocean of his exhaustless glory,—swallowed up in the overflowings of his love,—reposing among the tendernesses of his bosom,—towering in the dignity of spirits,—climbing the regions of light and life, the companions of Seraphim and Cherubim,—the very sons of God, and heirs of all the riches and joys of the universe? What is the world to this? "Its pomp, its pleasures, and its nonsense all?"

II. The superior value of the soul appears from *the amazing respect that has been paid to it.* Man must have been a very important being in the estimation of God, or he would not have built this beautiful and stupendous world for his habitation. But was it for the *body* that this planet was erected, or was chief respect had to the *soul*? It was not built for the dust, but for the immortal part; not for man as a mere animal, but for man as a subject of moral government,—for a nursery in which to foster his infant faculties for the employments of a vigorous and eternal manhood. It is for the life and growth of the soul that the valleys spread out their bosoms,—that the mountains lift up their heads towards heaven,—that ocean, with its million waves, laves the shore,—that serpent, fish, and bird were formed, "and the cattle upon a thousand hills." It was to light the soul in its way to glory that the sun and moon were hung out of heaven. 'Tis for its "sake all nature stands and stars their courses move." Amazing thought! Where am I? Methinks the sun, moon, and stars look down tremblingly to observe its fate. All nature seems to sit in solemn silence, looking out of all her eyes, to watch the destinies of the soul.

But no respect which has been paid to the soul puts so vast an *estimate* upon it as the price that was paid for its redemption. What

must have been the valuation of the soul in heaven, when that God before whom all nations are as the "dust of the balance," became an infant in the manger of Bethlehem, sweat blood in Gethsemane, was beaten and spit upon in the judgment hall, and expired on the ragged irons? Every groan of Calvary pronounced the worth of the soul to be greater than ten thousand material worlds. The Son of God would not have given his life to redeem the whole material universe from ruin. He would not have shed a drop of his blood to save this world with all its lumber from the flames. He will of choice give it to the flames when its use to the soul of man shall be ended. And yet he shed all his blood to save the soul.

God has discovered his high regard for the soul by the pains he has taken to give a written revelation to the world, to establish and preserve a church and houses of worship, to institute sabbaths and sacraments and a Gospel ministry, and by all the labors and calls of six thousand years. The body may be cast upon a dunghill and eaten by worms, and God regards it not; but in the day that the animal part is committed to the loathsome grave, he takes special care that this noble particle of himself shall not enter among the dead, but raps it away to the region of spirits.

Angels also discover their high regard for the soul, by leaving the realms of glory to consume their time upon this distant planet by daily ministrations for its salvation. Should a company of the greatest men in Europe cross the Atlantic to manage a certain business, the world would be looking after them, and would conclude that the interest they came to manage was of vast importance. What then shall we think of the soul? *that* "for whose guard the angel bands come flying from above?"

Heaven and earth, God, angels, and good men are engaged to deliver the soul. And this is not all; hell is in motion to oppose its deliverance. Myriads of principalities and powers are leagued against it. "How great must be the value of the soul," says one, "when *three worlds* are thus contending for it." Would three worlds, I ask, thus contend for this little particle of dust called *earth*? No, but they will contend for the soul of man.

III. What completes the value of the soul is its *immortality, and perhaps eternal progression.* This life is but the threshold of our existence,—a breath; we gasp once here and live forever. If we owned the whole world it could not attend us a step beyond the grave; but if we once obtain the heavenly inheritance, we shall carry it with us down through the revolving ages of eternity. If want and affliction beset us here, death will soon close the distress; but if we lose our soul the loss will be forever. This is that last death which death itself cannot destroy. The fashion of this world passes away; the earth will soon grow crazy with age; the sun itself shall wax

dim in its orbit; the stars shall fall like the leaves of autumn; but the deathless soul shall survive the wreck of worlds. And when another period, as long as the world's age, shall have passed, and as many such periods as there were moments in the first, the soul will have just begun its course. To stand on some eminence like Pisgah and look away into eternity, O what a prospect rushes on the eye! Let imagination spread all her pinions and swiftly pursue the flying soul, through ages of joy enough to dissolve mortal flesh,—and keep on wing and still pursue, through periods which human numbers cannot calculate—until the fancy has got so far from home as hardly to be recalled;—it must still return and leave the flying soul to explore ages after ages,—a boundless eternity of inexpressible bliss. And when it returns to earth, how it sickens at worldly glory, and calls mortal life a blank, a point, no time at all.

Let it stretch its wings again, and follow the excruciated soul through ages of unutterable endurance—through fire intense enough to melt down all the planets. One period after another passes by it as it flies,—until it looks back on the first million of years as on a speck in the horison, and still it hears the tormented soul exclaim, "*My agony is just begun.*" God of mercy, preserve this assembly from this eternity of pain.

Our fainting minds will be overwhelmed with the value of the soul if we admit its eternal progression. It is so difficult to conceive of one's living forever in heaven without acquiring any new ideas, or any deeper impressions from ideas already received, that it is generally believed that holy creatures will forever grow in capacity and enjoyment. And there are certainly passages of Scripture which favor this opinion. I shall venture no assertion on this point; but taking the thing for granted at present, what an august being will a human soul become. Observe its progress in the present life and the dignity which it here accumulates. Yesterday it was a babe weeping in its mother's arms;—to-day it is a child and we chide it;—to-morrow it is a philosopher and we revere him. Let this progress be extended to a million of years, and how great has that creature become. A thousand times more difference between him and a Newton, than between a Newton and an infant. Mark that miniature of man just opening its eyes on the light: yet that minim of being contains a soul which will one day outstrip the ranges of the widest imagination. That spark will grow to the flame of a seraph; that thinking thing will fly through heaven. Observe that poor Christian doomed to hard labor, covered with sweat and dust. The world sweeps by him without deeming him worthy of a look, and considers him only an animal. Yet that same poor man will soon be greater than a nation combined. While carrying burdens on his bending shoulders, (ye know him not,) he is an angel in disguise: the reverse of the stage, where a poor

man acts the king, but passing behind the curtain dwindles to a pauper; for here a king acts the pauper, and as soon as the curtain falls ascends his throne. See that mingled throng in the streets, fluttering about like insects in the summer's sun,—the reputed creatures of a day. How little is it considered that every one of that number, and of those human shapes in the filthy dungeon, is destined to eternal progression, and will one day be greater than kings in glory or equally great in misery. Fix your eyes a little upon that throng, and silently mark whither they will go when they disperse. I follow one with my eyes to his secret apartment: I see the shiverings of death stealing upon him; the tears of mourners fill the room; the soul bursts its cerement, and is an angel now: wings are lent it, and I trace it soaring through the regions of light. I follow it in its course of endless progression until it has become greater than Gabriel was. I pursue till it has become greater than the whole human race were in this infant world,—till it has become greater than all the angels together were when it left the body: and I leave it still progressing towards God, approximating towards his infinite dimensions,—a point at an immeasurable distance, but at which it is eternally stretching away. We are lost, we are swallowed up in the boundless prospect.

Upon the principle of eternal progression, (however slow that progression may be,) these are the destinies of the feeblest soul that ever enters heaven.

I return to the street. I follow another of the crowd through his round of dissipation,—through many serious thoughts, many broken resolutions,—until I trace him to a dying bed. His soul is forced from the body amidst the agonies of distracted friends, and, staring with wild affright, is dragged to the mouth of the pit and plunged into hell. And is not this enough? Good God, is not this enough? Must it still proceed from bad to worse? This is believed by many from the very nature of the soul, and from hell's being called a "*bottomless* pit," in which, as the figure seems to import, one may sink forever deeper and deeper in misery without finding a bottom. It is also alleged that the same unchangeable purity that required the punishment of sins committed in the body, will equally require an increase of misery to provide a punishment for all the rage and wickedness of hell. That the punishment will be endless is certain, but whether it will be progressive I will not venture to assert. But the thing being once admitted, consequences result enough to shake a world. *Then* the time will come when the smallest soul in hell will contain more misery than Satan now does;—time will come when the smallest soul in hell will endure more *in one hour* than has been endured on earth by all nations since the creation. And further still,—it is too awful to proceed. O what a God is that which lives from eternity to eternity! O what a redemption did Christ come to accomplish, from this eternity of pain to this immortality of glory! O what a soul has man!

Surely it was worth being redeemed by the blood of the Son of God. Surely it is worth being saved by a life of self-denial and prayer. What can be too much to give in exchange for the soul?

How solemnly important do sabbaths now appear, and time, and the Bible, and every thing which relates to the soul's salvation. The sun, moon, and stars appear solemn in shining; the earth, the concave, and all nature seem to borrow the solemnity of eternity; and this world appears only the cradle in which souls yet in swaddling bands are rocked for immortality.

Heir of immortality, bow before thine own majesty. Debase not thyself by sordid actions. A royal infant, while in his nurse's arms, though unconscious of his dignity, is yet born to sway the sceptre and fate of nations, and should be trained up in habits according with his august destinies. Whilst thou art pursuing every idle phantom, thou forgettest the dignity of thy nature and the infinite grandeur of thy destinies. But thou wast born for great things. Those eyes were formed to see great things, and that soul to experience amazing sensations. Man, thou hast a world in thyself. Child of death, thou hast a concealed treasure in thy bosom, (alas too concealed,) which the exhausted Indies could not purchase. Crowns and kingdoms sink to nothing before it. It is worth more than the sun, moon, and stars, if the sun were gold and every star a ruby. If from the birth-day of this earth omnipotence had been exerted to create as many worlds in a moment as there are dusts in this, and all these worlds were gold and diamond, and possession to be given for eternity, they would all be like filth of the street to the value of thy soul. And wilt thou live and die ignorant of the treasure thou possessest? Wilt thou squander it all for toys and be an everlasting bankrupt? When thou shalt carry back thy soul to Him who gave thee the talent, fair and glorious, to improve for him, and to return still more fair and glorious, and shalt present it such a ruinous mass, what will the Judge say to thee? If they must perish who murder the body, what a death of deaths is due to those who murder the soul. Less vile would it be, were the soul out of the question, to destroy the bodies of a whole nation. This vast, this magnificent soul of man! Were there no God to sin against, I had almost said, it would deserve eternal damnation to sin against such a soul.

Ah sinner, this soul of thine is on the point of being lost forever, and immense difficulties lie in the way of saving it. Up, without delay, and see what can be done. Surely the infinite treasure is worth one mighty effort to save it.

Should you reign universal emperor of this lower world for three score years and ten, and then sink into eternal misery, what an infinite loser would you be. What solace would the world be to you after your soul was lost? All the streams and oceans you had commanded would not afford you a drop of water to cool your tongue; but the

remembrance of past prosperity would only aggravate present distress. The wealth of Xerxes and Crœsus now avails them not; it is no comfort to Alexander that he conquered the world; nor is Nero profited by a name to live after he is dead.

But if to exchange the soul for *a world* would be a senseless bargain, how worse than mad to sacrifice it for a *toy*. No sinner obtains the whole world at last, and most that lose their souls receive but a small pittance in return. How many are selling their deathless souls for some paltry sum extorted by oppression, for the momentary pleasure of the brute, for the intoxicating bowl, for the dark delight of marring another's fame, for the useless diversion of profaning the name of God, for a toy,—a nothing when nothing is offered,—a nothing *always*,—and *less* than nothing. For nothing more is gained than though the soul were saved, and all the present delights of religion are lost. This great mart, the world, is full of distracted men, hurrying from place to place to barter their souls for less, *far* less than nothing. They sell them now for naught, but time will come when they would give ten thousand worlds to redeem them back again. But then it will be too late. For what can a man in hell "give in exchange for his soul?"

My dear hearers, my heart is distressed with the apprehension that some of *you* will lose your souls. Indeed, I expect nothing else. You are hearing these solemn truths perhaps with indifference, if not with disgust. You will go careless from the house of God. You will think little of what you have heard until a dying day. But then perhaps these truths will meet you again. You need not then be told of the worth of the soul. Perhaps the pangs of dissolving nature will be your least distress. You may then remember this day, and mourn that the warnings of anxious love were unheeded. I can do no more than *entreat* you, and I *do* entreat you with the most heart-felt regard. And if you are offended at this freedom, I ask but one more privilege,—to weep and pray for you in secret, and to cry in the midnight hour, "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end."

SERMON CCXLI.

BY EDWARD D. GRIFFIN, D. D.

THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.

COL. i. 10.—*That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and* INCREASING IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD.—(Particularly the last clause.)

THE knowledge of God lies at the foundation of all true religion. It is the want or indistinctness of this knowledge that occasions all the stupidity of sinners and all the false hopes of professing Christians; that produces most of the religious errors which abound in the world; that causes so much superficial, proud, worldly religion even among the sincere, and so little religion even among judicious Christians. Although this most precious of all knowledge is open to all, yet there is very little of it in the world,—very little of it in the Church of Christ. There is so much unbelief and aversion to God, so much pride and worldliness, so much guilt that shrinks from clear views of God, so much sluggishness which binds the soul to earth, that the mass even of Christians pass to the grave with a very incompetent knowledge of God. Even their serious thoughts linger too much on earth. Their religious knowledge and conversation are too confined to subordinate subjects; and in their very prayers their eyes are apt to be more intensely fixed on the blessings they ask or the sins they deplore, than on the face of God himself. Now and then a Christian arises who outstrips the piety of his contemporaries, and stands a luminary to enlighten and to be admired by remote generations. If you search for the cause of his pre-eminent piety, it is to be found in his superior knowledge of God. Desirous to see a greater number of eminent Christians formed, and to witness the prevalence of that religion which is enlightened, judicious, and humble; I am anxious to press upon my hearers, to press upon my brethren in the Church, to press upon my own soul, the study of God. The knowledge which I would recommend, though it includes the speculation of the understanding, is not confined to it. It consists in a clear discernment of God's spiritual glory and in a holy intimacy with him; which can be obtained neither by a speculative knowledge without right affections, nor yet by warm affections without deep and extensive knowledge.

In general it may be observed that the great end for which men were sent into the world was to learn the character of their Maker, by studying his glories in his works and word, that they might obey and enjoy him. The great end which God had in view in all his works was to make an illustrious display of his perfections, that creatures might know him and be united to him in sublime and everlasting communion. All things which are proposed as objects of our belief or knowledge, are but one complicated lesson of God which we were sent into the world to learn. The vast and interesting object on which his divine eye is immoveably fixed, and which in the progress of time he will fully attain, is to fill the world,—the universe,—with the knowledge of *his glory.* He declared to Moses, "As truly as I live all the earth

shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." The harp of prophecy awoke to rapture on this delightful theme. Isaiah struck the note, and Habakkuk triumphantly resounded, "The earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea." The object of the *whole creation* will not be lost; *creatures shall know him.* The end for which *human beings were placed on this earth* will be attained: it must be that men shall know their God,—know him in a far greater measure than they have done in past ages. The times are rolling on,—the light is bursting from a thousand sources,—the world will be flocking to the great display,—all nations will be in motion. Arise ye and join them, and hasten to the knowledge of God. Come, for it is the end of all things, and it is the end of your creation.

Further, God is the being with whom we have the most intimate and interesting connexion; and therefore we ought certainly, and it chiefly concerns us, to become acquainted with him. He is the being with whom we chiefly have to do in time and eternity. It is in him that we live and move and have our being, and he will be our final Judge. He is the author of all our comforts on earth; and he will be to eternity either the author and object of our whole enjoyment, or the executioner of his wrath upon us. Should it not be a chief desire to get acquainted with the benefactor who has sent all our comforts to us for so many years, and with the fearful Name on which all our future destinies depend? Shall a man be anxious to see the generous stranger who once relieved his wants, or the relation in a foreign country who is to make him his heir? and shall we be indifferent to an acquaintance with our God?

Further, there is room for far more enlarged knowledge of God than any of us have yet acquired. In the recesses of his nature are laid up treasures of knowledge which eternal research will not exhaust. None but he who from eternity lay in his bosom could with perfect propriety say, I know thee. In this world the best of Christians see through a glass darkly, and know but in part what they were destined to know. Agur found reason in his humility to complain, "I neither learned wisdom nor have the knowledge of the Holy." The apostle Paul, after having spoken of the primitive Christians as knowing God, thought proper to correct the expression as being too strong: "But now after that ye have known God, *or rather are known of God.*" This distinction is made by the same apostle in another place: "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know; but if any man *love* God, the same is *known of him.*" The lowest degree of perfect knowledge is reserved for heaven: "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known." Our knowledge of God will at best continue imperfect "till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the *knowledge* of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." There is therefore abundant room for the most enlightened Christians to increase in the knowledge of God, and to plunge deeper and still deeper into this ocean without a bottom or a shore. What a call then for Christians of ordinary attainments to stir up their sluggish spirits, to clear away the mist from their eyes, that they may gaze with more intenseness upon God,—that they may study him with deeper scrutiny and contemplate him with clearer discernment.

Several motives to this have already been presented. What remains is to show that a clear knowledge and discernment of God is of all things the most *purifying*, the most *humbling*, the most *exalting*, the most *happy*.

I. It is the most *purifying*. A sight of God is transforming. It is only when "with open face" we behold "as in a glass the glory of the Lord," that we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory." A view of God shining "in the face of Jesus Christ," is the faith which purifies the heart and produces good works. When God is seen in all the majesty of his glory, in the awful purity of his holiness, the Christian *cannot, dare not* wilfully sin. He has a holy jealousy of himself; he dreads the least movement of unhallowed affections, the least hypocrisy in his devotions, and towards men is meek, gentle, and affectionate. He pants after universal purity with groanings that cannot be uttered. This is the faith "which worketh by *love*,"—by deep and fervent love: and it is love only that can purify the soul. Under the influence of these views the Christian knows what it is to be moved to action by the love of God in Christ, and can draw from God all his motives to active service and holy living. He feels it reasonable to dedicate himself forever to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and longs to employ all his faculties to the glory of his heavenly Father. This is the faith which overcomes the world. Riches, honors, the world are dead. The Christian can now view things precisely in the light that Paul did when he counted all things but loss in comparison with the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Such a view of God in Christ will do more to purify the soul from sin and to guard it against temptation, than the most refined knowledge of subordinate subjects in religion,—than all systematic proficiency,—than gazing forever at the outside of the temple without looking within. It will do more than all prayers, and means, and exertions which are not accompanied with these direct views; for nothing but direct views can produce love. A raging fire is not extinguished by beating the flame, but by a plentiful application of the opposite element. And the fire of lust and passion is not to be subdued by human efforts directly applied; it yields only to the love of God,—love which nothing but direct views of him can excite. These views are of more efficacy to cleanse the soul than all the glooms of guilt. It is a mistake to calculate on purifying the heart by confining our views to ourselves and our sins, and plunging into darkness to avoid being proud of our comfort. One such view of God as saints enjoy in heaven, is a greater defence against sin than all the glooms of hell. Hence we read of escaping "the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," and are exhorted to "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour." Our text connects a fruitfulness "in every good work" with "increasing in the knowledge of God;" and Peter speaks of eminent Christians not being "barren nor unfruitful *in* the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." The want of this knowledge is made a distinctive mark of slaves to sin, and a profession of this knowledge is counted for a profession of purity: "Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some, [does he say that they are slaves to sin? no, but he says the same thing in other words; for some] have not the knowledge of God." "They profess to know God, but in works they deny him," and prove by their sins that they know him not.

Would you then make greater advances in grace? Would you escape the sins and overcome the temptations which cause you so much distress? Would you attain to a more heavenly mind and wear forever a brighter crown? There is but one way;—you must increase in the *knowledge* of God.

II. This knowledge is the most *humbling* of all things. Other

knowledge "puffeth up," but the more God is seen the more abased the soul will be. All the glooms of guilt, all the fears of hell, all the views of sin which are not accompanied with a spiritual discernment of God, will not humble the soul. These all exist in hell, but there is no humility there. The most just and exquisite sense of sin is acquired by considering, not so much *what we have done*, as *what God is*. A discovery of his awful dignity and excellent holiness reveals the evil of sinning against him, and lays the penitent soul speechless at his feet. When we can perceive God to be so holy and glorious that a bare neglect to love him would deserve eternal wo, and that no conceivable punishment is great enough for the wretch that dares rebel against him; when with spiritual discernment we contemplate God turning the angels out of heaven for sin, turning Adam out of Eden, turning a beautiful world into a prison house of groans, a shambles of blood, turning millions into hell, and more than all, thrusting his sword through the heart of his own Son; then we discover, in a light unknown before, what sin deserves and what we are; and lifting a pleading eye to Jesus, we lay ourselves down in the dust to wonder at the patience and mercy of God. No flights of soul are felt, but a heavenly calm. Animal feelings lie still and overawed. All is silent wonder and complacency; not a passion, but a solid reality of feeling; not a tender tumult of animal nature, but something like the clear vision of the soul. While the religion of the animal affections inflates the soul with self-conceit, this is the surest death of pride and every evil passion. Instead of making comparisons in his own favor, the Christian now thinks himself a bare-naked nothing before God, and wonders that such a being should set his love on him. The more he feels his guilt, the more happy his humbled spirit is; for guilt brings a sense of the precious mercy of his God and Saviour; and he now perceives, what to some may seem a paradox, that if a sense of guilt were banished from heaven, much of the happiness of heaven would be banished with it. While he thus lies in the dust, gazing upon the face of God, he forgets to make calculation for his own character, and thinks not so much what he is or is to be, as what God is. He would rather enjoy the light of heaven in retirement, unknowing and unknown, than without this to be arrayed in imperial purple. He feels indifferent to human distinctions, and has no present necessity to guard against the fear of man. He is now conscious of the impenetrable fortitude which disinterested humility can produce. With all his views, he is sensible that he yet sees but a glimpse of God, feels guilty for the want of clearer apprehensions, fears the loss of the little sense he has, and pants earnestly after more.

Such a glimpse of God had Job when all his glory fell and withered in the dust. No sooner had God spoken from the whirlwind, than he laid himself on his face and meekly said, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." When Elijah was in Horeb, neither the "great and strong wind" that "rent the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks," nor yet the "earthquake" nor the "fire," could move him; but when the "still small voice" came, diffusing through his soul a sense of God, instantly he wrapped his blushing face in his mantle. When Isaiah saw "the Lord sitting on a throne high and lifted up, and his train" filling "the temple," and the seraphim crying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts," and "the posts of the door" moving at the sound of their voice; then it was that he exclaimed, "Wo is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the

midst of a people of unclean lips; [how did he discover this?] *for* my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." When Peter discovered the Godhead of Christ shining gloriously through the man, he instantly fell at his feet, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." When Daniel, Ezekiel, and John had visions of God, though it was but a glimpse that they saw, they fell on their faces and became as dead men. Thus it appears that a sight of God has the greatest power to abase the creature. If then you wish the haughtiness of your heart reduced, the torment of your pride relieved, and would enjoy the luxury of an humble mind, you must increase in the knowledge of God.

III. This knowledge, at the same time that it is the most humbling, is the most *exalting*. One such view as Moses had, will raise the soul above the world and lift it to heaven. It will do more than all other views to ennoble the mind, to elevate it above the vulgar pursuits of men, and make it conversant with the skies. If it is a dignity to be intimately acquainted with great *men*, what is the dignity of knowing and being known of God? It is the most noble and sublime knowledge, and worthy of the most aspiring desires of the immortal mind.

IV. This knowledge brings with it the greatest *happiness*. One direct view of God fills the soul with greater peace than the most splendid attainments in the subordinate branches of divine knowledge,—than the most extensive acquaintance with human science,—than all the glories of the world. Such is the nature of God, and such is the nature of man, that nothing in heaven or earth can fill the human soul with peace and joy, and satisfy its immortal cravings, but the knowledge and enjoyment of God. This is to be the happiness of *heaven*, because nothing greater can be provided for creatures. When the glories of God break upon the soul, peace descends upon it like "the dew of Hermon;" all its disturbing passions are still; it feels not the uneasiness of one unsatisfied desire. God reigns,—God is in its view,—God is its portion, and it is enough. It enjoys a peace which passeth understanding. Bright are its mornings, calm its noons, and serene its nights. When the ardent Peter cast an affectionate eye upon the churches, he would breathe no wish more fervent than that "grace and peace" might "be multiplied unto" them "*through* the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." Let the race of men then return from their idle pursuits, and know that the shortest and only road to happiness is found. Here is the great secret discovered which men have searched for in every land, and roved to seek in the ends of the earth.

These direct views of God, and none but these, can bless the soul with "the full assurance of hope." The lower exercises of religion cannot do it. Self examination, without these direct views, cannot do it. But under these open views, the Christian is conscious of taking firm hold of God in Christ, and knows that there is not a phantom in his embrace, but the very God of Israel. He sees him to be a solid rock, and knows that he rests his soul on him and cannot sink. He is conscious of believing in him, and trusts in the divine word that he shall be accepted and kept to the heavenly kingdom. His former hopes, which arose from tender meltings of soul, were feeble and wavering; but now his hope is a solid thing, excited by an open view of the fulness and faithfulness of God in Christ. He can now lift an unpresuming eye to heaven and call it all his own. He can gaze at the throne of God which once rocked with thunders, and see no terrors there. With lips trembling with gratitude and eyes suffused with tears, he can look *up and call the Almighty* God his father, and the blessed Jesus his Sa-

viour and his brother. Standing on the summit of Pisgah and stretching his eyes over his inheritance, he rejoices "with joy unspeakable and full of glory." This is the blessed consequence of "increasing in the knowledge of God." "Acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee."

Suffer me now, my dear hearers, to bring these several arguments to bear on the single point, and to press you with their united force to devote yourselves to the study of God, and to earnest exertions after more clear and spiritual views of him.

My first address shall be to professing Christians. By all the motives which have been presented, I pray you, my brethren, not to rest satisfied with superficial knowledge, nor with enlarged knowledge of subordinate branches of Christian science; but seek earnestly to obtain a deep and spiritual discernment of God. Rest not contented with the name and profession of Christians. Rest not contented with a few serious thoughts, added to a cold round of external duties, while your minds remain confused on every elevated point of religious truth. Think it not enough that you can weep at a description of Christ's sufferings, without understanding the designs of his death or discerning the glories of the way of salvation by him. Seek to know more of the vast designs which God is carrying into execution in the government of the world. Strive to add to systematic knowledge, clear views of the glory of God in all his works and ways. When you open your bibles, let it be with earnest desires to find something that shall give you a greater insight into the character of God and the wonders of redemption. When you open any other religious book, let it not be to amuse yourselves with the beauties of the style, nor to obtain mere systematic knowledge, nor to produce a general *indiscriminate* impression of seriousness; but to obtain, if possible, clearer and more extensive views of God. When you enter the house of God, let it not be to gratify curiosity, nor to conform to fashion, nor merely from a *general* wish to perform a duty; but always come with a prayer on your tongue that you may behold the glory of God in the sanctuary, and carry away some enlarged views of his perfections. When you hold religious conversation with your Christian friends, let it not be to hear yourselves talk, and to indulge the common loquaciousness of empty minds, nor to display your zeal, nor to enjoy the pleasure of being moved yourselves or moving others to weep, nor even for the sake of the mere satisfaction of spending a serious hour; but let your object be to obtain and communicate a more distinct and affecting knowledge of God. When you kneel to pray, let it always be with an intense desire to obtain clearer views of God, and to arise more deeply impressed with a sense of his glorious attributes. In the time of prayer, keep your eyes steadfastly fixed on God, and let all the efforts of your devotion be to look further and still further into the immeasurable heights of his perfections. Let this be the object of all your serious meditations and of all your religious duties.

Such a course, persisted in with sincerity and ardor, could not fail to raise you to the rank of eminent Christians. If you would faithfully make the experiment for a single year, you would see what a great difference it would make in your graces and comforts. And I will venture to predict with confidence, that you will never grow in grace in any other way, and that you will grow in grace exactly in proportion as you sincerely pursue this course. You never will become eminent Christians on easier terms. Will you then set out in this course, and

holding on your way with unwearied zeal, aspire to eminence in piety? Why should you not become distinguished Christians? Why should you not aim at the eminence of Enoch and Moses and David and Elijah? The same God that raised them so high still reigns, and is accessible to you. You may go to that exhaustless store-house and take as much as you please. Why benumb every effort by the miserable calculation that it is not for *you* to attain such eminence? Who told you so but your own sluggish hearts? The grace and power of God are open to you, and if you fall short of that superior height the fault will be your own. If you are straitened, you are not straitened in God but in yourselves. Will you then arise from your sluggish repose and march manfully toward the mark, and resolve to die stretching with all your might to outstrip the piety of the prophets?

Alas the world draws so powerfully that I fear few will be excited to such noble calculations. In the present rage for gain and distinction, the mass of professors seem determined not to be encumbered with more religion than will allow them to take the world along with them to heaven. How few there are that aspire to more religion than just enough to keep them out of hell. It is not a day to form many eminent Christians. It is a day of too much prosperity and worldly attachment. The times of persecution and ancient simplicity could produce a Flavel and a Baxter and a thousand others, inferior only to them. But where are the Baxters and Flavels of the present day? Prosperity has weakened our strength, and the world has bound us fast, and here we sleep in ignoble sloth, and exist only to shame our fathers and contaminate our children. In the name of God, my brethren, awake and move towards heaven. Rend the veil from your eyes, tear the world from your hearts, and arise to life and to action. Must I return and make the complaint to him who sent me, that they will not hear? While I speak thus to you, my dear brethren, I reprove myself. I have reason to bow under the humiliating thought that I too have little knowledge or sense of God. To whom then shall we all apply? Who shall give us and a sleeping world a clearer discovery of God? He, he only, can pluck the film from our eyes and pour his glories upon our astonished sight. O that he would come forth and force himself upon our view. O that he would speak and shake a drowsy world from their sleep, and show them what a God there is that ruleth in the earth.

One word to impenitent sinners and I have done. Have you no desire, my unhappy friends, to know that God in whose presence you must shortly stand, whose hand must measure out your rewards or smite you with his thunders? Did you never read that "the Lord Jesus Christ shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that *know not God?*" *You* are they that know not God; and in this state you are fast approaching the judgment of the great day; and here you are sleeping in dreadful security! God Almighty awaken you from the slumbers of your destruction! Do you begin to awake? Do you *wish* to find the knowledge of God? Shall I tell you how you can be so blest? "If thou criest after knowledge and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver and searchest for her as for hidden treasures, then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord *and find the knowledge of God.*" I can say no more. I deliver you over into the hands of divine grace, and pray "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom *and revelation in the* knowledge of him." AMEN.

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SERMON CCXLII.

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THE FAITHFUL PREACHER, AND WAGES OF UNFAITHFULNESS.

1 Cor. ix. 16.— *Wo is unto me if I preach not the Gospel.*

Fathers and Brethren: From this disciple of Gamaliel, this Apostle of Jesus, of miraculous call and special appointment, this humble, self-denied, laborious, persevering preacher of the Gospel, let us learn that it is not the prerogative of birth, or talents, or education, or past or present success, to entitle us to a life of indolence or ease, relief from toil, or deliverance from wakeful anxious care. To whomsoever a dispensation, or stewardship of the Gospel is committed, on him there is laid an indispensable necessity to preach it; and when he has with all readiness of mind yielded obedience to the very uttermost, he has nothing, in the presence of man or God, wherein to glory. Instead of this, if he preaches from sinister motives, if he preaches negligently, or if unjustifiably he ceases to preach the Gospel, he has nothing to expect but wo. So saith this envoy of Heaven to a perishing world. "Wo is unto me if I preach not." Wo is unto every minister of Jesus who does not, to the extent of his ability and opportunity, preach the word of reconciliation. Wo is unto every one who measures the amount of necessity laid upon him by blind precaution, or blinder prejudice, and not by the wants of the perishing, the worth of the soul, the will of the Father, the grace of the Sanctifier, and the love of the Saviour. Wo is unto us, my brethren, if we preach not up to the full measure of all our muscular and mental power, excited and invigorated by the energy of the Spirit of him who says, "as your day is so shall your strength be"—"lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Yea, moreover, wo is unto us if we take not as the model of our ministry, the example of those "who subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and showed mighty signs and wonders," and above all the example of him who "for the joy

that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God.

Fellow workers, were our hearts fully imbued with the grace of the Gospel, did we every hour apprehend the greatness of its salvation, *did we feel for those who tremble on the outmost precipice of perdition, ready to sink into endless remorse and despair;* oh! did we behold the recording angel writing the account of our stewardship, and hastening to complete it in time to meet us at the bar of God; did we believe that transgressions and omissions may be equally loathsome in God's esteem—we should cease to wonder at the ardor of Paul, and, despite of indolence, and worldly influence, and the fear of man, we also, in the ardor of our souls, should exclaim, "wo is unto us if we preach not the Gospel."

The meaning of the text obviously is, that the preacher of the Gospel who suffers any worldly consideration, any personal claim, any selfish motive, to diminish, interrupt or suspend his labors, has nothing to expect but wo. Though an unfolding of the meaning of the term "Gospel" is not necessary in order that we may exhibit the sentiment of this text, yet as that term gives a strong emphasis to this truth, we may be pardoned if we for a moment dwell on its import.

The Gospel! Good tidings of great joy to all people! Tidings of the Saviour, Christ the Lord! Tidings of the undertaking, the advent, the meritorious sufferings, and the prevalent advocacy of Jesus Christ. Tidings proclaimed in promise, published in prophecy, and recorded in history, of blessings, purchased by his blood, and secured in his covenant, suited to our nature, adapted to our necessities, and designed to effect our complete redemption! Tidings tending to produce within us humility, and devotedness to God, and to put us in possession of faith, consolation, and joy, by exciting our minds to consider the divinity of his nature, the glories of his Godhead, the importance of his offices, the depth of his condescension, the greatness of his love, the innocence of his life, the agonies of his death, the prevalence of his prayers, the riches of his grace, the splendors of his glory, the preciousness of his promises, and the perpetuity of his kingdom, whose mediatorial crown will brighten forever. All this was implied in the angel's annunciation; all this is embraced in that Gospel which was proclaimed by Paul, to whom this grace was given that he should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;—such is the Gospel, the word of reconciliation which is committed unto us, the ministry of reconciliation, who are sent forth commissioned to preach it for the salvation of sinners, and the glory of Christ; and wo is unto us if we preach it not.

Two inquiries here naturally arise in the mind,—

I. When do we so preach as to escape the wo here denounced?

II. Wherein does this wo consist?

To the first question, when do we so preach as to escape the wo ? it may be replied,

1. We so preach, when we exhibit to all men the whole of the Gospel in its plain and obvious meaning, neither covering its glories under metaphysical clouds, nor concealing its simpler teachings by scholastic refinements; neither breaking up its obvious connection to establish a favorite system, nor quoting unfairly to sanction a schismatic shibboleth; neither polishing down the honest severity of its expressions, nor presenting them in such a way as shall least disturb the sinner; neither softening the rigor of its precepts and the sternness of its threatnings, nor concealing for effect one of its encouragements, its invitations, or its great and precious promises; but, on the contrary, honestly, openly, freely, fully, always declaring to men the whole counsel of God, as it is recorded in the volume of revelation.

2. We so preach as to escape the wo, when, according to the custom of Christ, we make known the truth in the temple reared for, and dedicated to, God's public worship; or when like him we preach in the humble synagogue, the place of less systematic and less finished but not less solemn or acceptable instruction; or when like him we go from city to city, from hamlet to hamlet, from house to house, from heart to heart, preaching the plain, simple Gospel of God our Saviour, using the mountain's side, the valley's retreat, the thronged temple, the lonely wilderness, the hill, the plain, the fisher's boat, the public path, or the pilgrim's seat, as the place where to address the man or the multitude, according to the letter of instruction accompanying our commission. We so preach, when like Philip we address the individual, or when like Peter we address the household, or when like Paul we warn every man, and teach every man publicly and from house to house, day and night, in season and out of season, entreating and persuading by every motive which is presented by truth, and which should be influential in moving man's moral nature.

3. We so preach, when we attach to our sabbath services all that unspeakable importance with which they are invested by God, and at the same time do not consider them a full discharge of the duties of our week's ministrations; and when we do not trust that the polish, which six days labor may have given them, can satisfy God's requirements, or meet the claims of perishing souls, or purchase a dispensation for the omission of other holy and hourly recurring duties. Reason declares, and revelation sanctions the decision, that while we must give to pulpit preparations all the force of head and heart, affections and conscience, so must we give it also, in all its vigor, to the lecture room, the prayer meeting, the domestic circle, the confidential interview, the anxious inquiry, and the hopes and the fears of the new born soul; so must we give it also to the chamber of sickness and the bed of death; and so must we give it to all the sacred social efforts to evangelize the

world—*never forgetting that while we are saving our labor, souls are sinking for ever from hope.*

4. We so preach, when we do not suffer either the fear or the favor of men, to influence our ministry, to fashion our doctrine, to shape our exhortation, to select our subjects, to form our manner, or regulate the times, or the frequency, or the length of our duties; when, neither faithless to our Sovereign, nor ashamed of our embassy, we with confidence approach the conscience of every hearer; passing by none through negligence; but warning all to flee from the wrath to come. In doing which we must not separate doctrines from duties, nor dissociate the Christian charities, nor exceed the letter of our commission, nor suffer the curses of enemies, or the cautions of friends, to cool our ardor, or to paralyze our exertions, in the great work of proclaiming the Gospel of Christ.

5. We so preach, when not expecting to affect the sinner's heart or to arouse his conscience by ornament or polish, by show of learning or power of talents, and when firmly believing that nothing but the Gospel of God will convert the soul, we preach the Gospel, in matter and in form, according to our instructions, being more anxious to save the perishing from perdition, than to please the fastidious taste, or to indulge the affected sensibility,—giving indeed no occasion of offence by coarseness, personalities, invectives, or reproach; but at the same time preaching the Gospel, in its own order, and as much as may be in its own words, in all its sweetness and its severity, in all its conclusive argument and its sovereign requirement. How offensive soever to the unregenerate, who may count us their enemies for telling them the truth, and how contrary soever to carnal policy this course may be, it was the manner of our Master's teaching; and this should satisfy the heart of every disciple.

6. We so preach, when through all and above all we exemplify the Gospel in our life and labor, being through the cross of Christ crucified unto the world, and having the world crucified unto us. Thus dead to the sinful pleasures of life was Paul, when he exclaimed, "Wo is unto me if I preach not the Gospel."

II. It may be inquired, wherein does that wo consist which awaits the faithless preacher? "Wo is unto me." Wo! It is the language of distress, the voice of misery, the echo of anguish, the groan of despair. No other word so well befits the faithless preacher when self-condemned.

First Wo.—*Little success.*

It is the economy of God's husbandry, that he who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly. The great Husbandman has declared, "him that honoreth me I will honor, and he that despiseth me shall be lightly esteemed." And we confidently appeal for proof of the constancy of this result to the honest observation of all men. Wherever the pulpit

addresses of the sabbath, sparingly measured out, however labored or learned, constitute the sum of ministerial exertion, there is, there will be, but little success. We could point to many blighted congregations, to many languishing churches, as proofs of this truth, and as manifestations of the weight of this wo. Far be it from us to limit the power of the Holy One, by any preacher's faithlessness; but the history of the church every where exhibits a wonderful proportion between the means employed, and the blessing granted; as though God measured back full measures of disappointment into the heartless bosom of the indolent preacher, who estimates his duty by his fears of spending his strength—placing his own ease in preference to the cause of Christ and the salvation of souls. In woful sadness shall such gather the wilted stalk, the blighted ear, and the grainless sheaf, as their only harvest. Go to the infrequent, interrupted, deserted lecture; go to the tardy, discountenanced prayer-meeting; note the family visit, the personal conversation, the private exhortation, neglected; look at the church not blessed with parochial labor—and you will cease to wonder, why it is that ministers have occasion so often to say, "Lord who hath believed our report!" The faithful preacher will have reason continually to use these words in the sadness of compassion for the many who perish, but the faithless preacher will use them with remorseful pangs.

SECOND WO.—*Great discouragement.*

What can discourage us more than to see our labor lost, the Lord's work languishing, the spirit of God's people depressed, and our handful of seed, so well chosen, so skilfully prepared, and so carefully sown, which we so fondly hoped would grow up like the cedars of Lebanon, either dying in the furrow, or sparingly springing up, a few blighted, hopelss, headless stalks! Look we for the cause? Surely we should not expect to find it in ourselves. What can be done, which we have not done? Are not our frames delicate, are not our friends alarmed, are not our families anxious? Do we not sufficiently imprison our bodies, do we not study closely to understand every shade of speculation? Can any grace the pulpit with higher preparation? Can any desire more earnestly to conciliate the people, to secure their approval, to gain their applause? And yet six days labor lost in an hour! Ah, yes, and the song of praise has lost its ardor, the office of prayer has lost its animation, the very gospel has lost its effect, for now there is none who inquires, "what must I do to be saved?"

Who can bear the weight of this wo? Could we foresee its crushing burden, popularity would appear to be like the bubble on the mountain brook, and the joy of winning souls to God, to be of greater value than the world. This would rouse us from the spell of carnal influence, which binds us to a faithless, profitless service; and instead

of syllogizing with Socrates, or moralizing with Seneca, or philosophizing with Plato, or playing the orator with Cicero, we should be found taking our lives in our hands, keeping the retributions of eternity full in view, following gospel examples as our guides; and resolving to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified, we should be found taking as our motto, "wo is unto me if I preach not the Gospel;" and under cover of our high commission, forcing through the barriers of preconceived notions, of personal pride, and of pampered prejudice, however sanctioned by age, or strengthened by habit, we should boldly, though affectionately, carry the cause and cross of Christ into every house, and home to every heart.

Here, and here alone, can we hope for relief. Nothing else will ever lift the incumbent curse from the preacher's heart, oppressed by discouragements. In no other way can the bosom be filled with the joy and gladness of a plentiful harvest.

THIRD WO.—*Poverty of spirit.*

As our usefulness is diminished, our discouraged hearts are chilled, every fibre is relaxed, every power paralyzed, every preparation made with double weariness, and to every duty the soul is disinclined. The ever returning stone of the fable was not more oppressively discouraging, than will be the constantly recurring duties of each week. The labors of Hercules were not more fatiguing, than it will be to us, to visit the sick, to appear in the lecture room or the place of social prayer, to meet the tempted or the bereaved, the backsliding or the benighted, the cold or the unconverted. Each labor in its turn comes with condign wo upon the heart deprived of the riches of its resources, and drained of the stream of its consolations. Here the soul ceases to bring forth out of its stores any thing new or old. Here it is forced in agony often to acknowledge its leanness. Disappointment and destitution produce famine fatal alike to the faithless preacher and his unhappy people. Nor does it alter the case, that they "desire to have it so," and applaud, for the course he is pursuing, the instrument of their own undoing. Could we for an hour realize the coming pressure of this wo, it would arouse us to efforts to escape the curse—it would make us start from our present slumbers, with the cry—"wo is unto me if I preach not the Gospel."

FOURTH WO.—*Worldly mindedness.*

The heart cannot be either idle or empty. In proportion as it becomes indolent in holy offices, or poor in spiritual treasures, it will be busily employed in occupations of vanity, and abundantly filled with the pleasures of sin. Every place in the heart, not filled with the love and the labor of the Lord's vineyard, will be occupied according to our situation and circumstances: in the country with the farm, the cattle, the crops; in the city with the business, the fashions, the follies, the dissipation, the fiction, the lust of the flesh, the pride of life,

the pride of the eye, and whatever else, in contempt of duty, or in despite of mercy, ministers to the progress and pressure of this dreadful wo.

FIFTH WO.—*The contempt of men.*

Indolence, faithlessness, and folly, degrade the minister's character. Look at the priesthood of Spain, of Portugal, of France, or of South America. Is there not even in our own country occasion enough to inquire, and examples enough to answer the question, whether or not there is in society a man so meanly esteemed as the labor saving, time serving, money making minister of the Gospel? How would you esteem the physician who would visit his patient in the height of disease, only once in the week, and even then neither feel his pulse, nor ask a question in regard to his symptoms! No matter how learnedly he might discuss the origin, progress, and variety of disease, or the theory and efficacy of treatment,—you would hold him in contempt. What would you think of a lawyer who would attend to the cause of his client only on the court day, and then not examine a witness in the case? Or what would you think of a general, who would never visit camp or garrison except on the day of battle, even though his men had broken out into mutiny? No doubt in the same utter contempt do men, both good and bad, hold the preacher of the Gospel, whose hands and head and heart are not every day sanctified by the discharge of some of his holy duties—whose hours are not often given to examine the cases, and enter into the spiritual affairs of the souls committed to his care. You cannot contemplate his case for a moment without feeling in some degree the insupportable pressure of this wo.

SIXTH WO.—*The loss of spiritual comfort.* It belongs to God's dispensation of grace generally to pay back, even in this world, good measure, pressed down, heaped up, and running over. God generally rewards with present grace and its precious consolations, and always crowns with future glory, the man who rises above the claims of earth and flesh in the holy toil of saving sinners. But, on the other hand, he takes from the indolent his talent, and from the commissioned miser those comforts of the Gospel and those consolations of the Spirit, which he so parsimoniously ministers to others. God takes back in righteousness the joys of his salvation, and leaves the wretched guide to grope his way, without friend to counsel or support him, and without a star to tell the hour of the night, or give him hopes of the approach of dawn. All that formerly ministered to his pleasure, now heralds his coming misery, or helps to excite fearful forebodings of inevitable wo.

SEVENTH WO.—*Danger of dying in such a state.* How dreadful the prospect of approaching the judgment of the great day, to render an account of our stewardship, when the page of duties is almost a blank, while the page of derelictions is covered with the record of means possessed, but unemployed, opportunities afforded, but not em-

braced, souls not disturbed, sinners not warned, saints not edified, ministerial talents not exercised, duties not discharged, standing degraded, and profession disgraced! How terrible the prospect of presently meeting the everlasting execrations of those who have sunk and suffered through our fault! How gloomy the thought of meeting our early opportunities, our first impressions of duty, our vows, our prayers, our tears, the gifts received, the laws acknowledged, the promises believed, and all those bright examples which were presented for our approval and imitation, in the lives and in the deaths of the Saviour, the Patriarchs the Prophets, the Apostles, the martyrs, and the confessors of Jesus. For all these will be as so many swift witnesses to call down upon us the vengeance of this wo.

EIGHTH WO.—*Eternal death, or eternally diminished happiness.* If there be a wo which enters not into the ruin of the besotted pagans, which settles not on the soul of the ignorantly impenitent, it would seem just that it should be reserved for the eternal manifestation of God's immutable righteousness, in the deeper and more dreadful condemnation of the sordid, selfish, faithless minister of Christ. And, even though he should escape eternal death, through the sovereign grace of God, yet how must his happiness be forever diminished! The soul that might have turned many to righteousness, and shone as the stars for ever, is now, by its foolish faithlessness, shorn of its beams. The soul that might have struck the highest chord and tuned the sweetest lyre among the spirits of the just made perfect, now scarcely reaches the lowest note without forbidden discord. The minister of Gospel grace and mercy, who might have stood sublime amid the full beamings of the Sun of Righteousness, now scarcely gains admission to the twilight in the horizon of blessedness. The ambassadors who might have led back to the throne of God and of the Lamb, the submissive spirits of rebel provinces, and then taken their seats of honor next to the thrones of the Apostles, now are scarcely called home to heaven, even in the depths of God's condescension and long suffering. "Wo! wo! is into me if I preach not the Gospel."

Brethren, let us in the silence of our wakeful midnights, in the solemnities of our secret devotions, in the searchings of our own hearts, in our private studies, in our personal appeals to the consciences of our hearers, in our domestic visits, our sick-bed sympathies, and our sanctuary services—let us endeavor to ascertain, whether or not we are inheritors of this wo. Let us ever so preach, that we may "finish our course with joy, and the ministry which we have received of the Lord Jesus." Then, instead of wo, we shall hear, "well done, good and faithful servants, enter into the joy of your Lord." Then, instead of a curse, we shall receive a crown. Then, we shall not, as now, need to cheer each other on the field of labor; but, without weariness and with fulness of

joy, we shall be employed as kings and priests unto God forever and ever.

Finally, let all remember, that the duties and dangers of pastor and people are reciprocal. If it be his duty to preach, it is your duty, beloved hearers, so to hear as to escape the curse. If you hear not as you should, you must expect—to remain in impenitence, and harden others—to remain in unbelief, and hinder others—to continue in rebellion, and seduce others—to live unsanctified, and pollute others—to remain under condemnation, and involve others—to die accursed, and destroy others.

May God avert such awful wo, and may he bless you all with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Amen.

SERMON CCXLIII.

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GRACE IRRECONCILABLE WITH SIN.

ROM. VI. 1, 2.— *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*

IT is the glory of the Divine plan for saving sinners, that it tends to make them holy. It brings redemption from sin, and presents the strongest possible motives to purity of life. It has ever been the favorite objection of the unbeliever, that it encourages sin. His language is this:—If we are saved by grace—if we are justified by faith, without the deeds of the law, why are we not freed from all moral obligation? Is obedience necessary? Is not all restraint from sin removed? Does not God take occasion from our wickedness, to make a more luminous display of his own perfections, and especially, to show in brighter light the riches of his goodness? Why shall we not then continue in sin that grace may abound? The Apostle takes up this objection in the text, and pursues it in the two succeeding chapters. He deems it an unwarrantable attack upon the Gospel scheme of grace. He demonstrates the fact, that purity of heart and life is the legitimate

tendency of this plan of salvation, in the case of every pardoned sinner. The Divine Redeemer, instead of opening the door to transgression, has made the amplest provisions for holiness. The law is in no way made void, but established. While God's throne of mercy smiles on penitence, it frowns on iniquity with uncompromising severity. Where grace reigns, sin is subdued. Now, shall the charge of the proud unbeliever lie against this scheme of infinite grace, whereby men are raised from bondage and death? Does the believer in Christ understand, that the freedom into which he is introduced, is a liberty to sin? In the strong language of the text—"Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?" From these words we derive the following doctrine; some proof of which will now be adduced:—

It is the tendency of the Divine system of grace for the salvation of men, to destroy sin and promote holiness. This is evident,

1. *From the testimony of Scripture.* The Bible, in almost every page, exhibits the humble spirit and holy character of the servants of Christ. It also contains numerous declarations of the fruits of grace. "For the grace of God teacheth us, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world. God hath chosen you to salvation, *through sanctification of the Spirit.* Every one that hath this hope in him, *purifieth himself*, as Christ is pure. The gospel bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you since the day ye heard it and knew the grace of God in truth. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law but under grace." This is the language of the Holy Ghost, testifying that personal holiness is the fruit of salvation by grace. Sin is condemned. The grace bestowed on the sinner is invariably connected with inward sanctification and external purity. God has joined them together; let not man put them asunder. This doctrine is manifest,

2. *From the manner in which the Gospel provisions were made.* In this respect God's plan of mercy is full of wisdom. When he planned for salvation, he also laid a scheme for the destruction of sin. His moral government received no shock. The relation of man to his Maker was left, with its motives to obedience unimpaired. Jehovah provided to pardon and save the sinner in such a way, as to secure as deep an impression in regard to the evil nature and effects of sin, as if every transgressor had received the penalty of the law. The moral influence produced by punishments, is wholly secured. Salvation comes through a channel, in which the justice of the Sovereign is most impressively displayed. He expresses his displeasure towards sin in the cross. Its enormous evil is commensurate with the divine dignity of the Son. Man is made to see an innocent Being submitting

to untold agonies in his stead, as the suitable expression of his crime. All that *he* ought to endure, is illustrated amid the pains of the voluntary Sufferer. Here he sees at what expense a violated law must be sustained, while he is delivered from perdition. The "sinfulness of sin" is written in the blood, and expressed in the groans of an incarnate God.

Thus does God tell the world what sin is, and what is its desert, when he opens the way to heaven. Grace flows from the scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary. It comes attended with the strongest demonstration the throne of God could furnish, that he will never connive at sin. It does not spring from the ruins of a broken law, and the crumbling elements of Jehovah's empire, invaded and sundered by the destroyer. It does not come, because the Almighty has determined to let the deep and turbid tide of sin roll unrestrained over his vast dominions. No: salvation is no such thing. It is surrounded with the strongest barriers against transgression. It sheds the brightest light that ever beamed, on the dark deeps of sin. It declares in the strongest language God ever used, his eternal purpose to pursue and punish it, with his fiercest displeasure. The cross opens the way to heaven, but effectually shuts the door against sin.

3. *It was the express design of the Gospel plan of salvation, to free us from sin.* It is written, "Christ gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness." It is plainly declared in the following passage, that sanctification was the important end of salvation:—"Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it—that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." It was the design of Christ to save *from* sin, and not *in* sin. In no other way had holiness been known in this world of pollution. The renovation of man's moral nature could not have taken place. Abana and Pharpar would have been of no avail. Christ, by his death, opened the way of access to the waters of Jordan. He came expressly to prepare the highway of holiness, and conduct man back to the purity of the skies.

We hold forth a salvation, whose grand design is deliverance from sin. All who flee to it embrace it as such. Before this, and besides this, there is no sufficient provision, human or divine, for such a purpose. Look at its high object. See the evidence it bears of the intent of its Author, to redeem us from the power of sin. Who will impiously say, that grace and sin must go together? Who will charge God with letting down the obligations to obedience, when he saves us by Jesus Christ, who died for this very end, "that he might put away sin."

4. *The method in which salvation is applied, secures holiness to the subject of it.* The blessings of salvation are applied by the Holy Spirit. The mode of application is a part of the scheme. "According to his mercy he saves us, by the *washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.*" The incipient work of that Spirit, is "to convince of sin." Its complete work, is to "turn us from all iniquity." Not only does the sinner receive full pardon and deliverance from hell; but he is born of God, so that he cannot willingly commit sin. He has a new heart put within him, so that he hates sin as the enemy of God, the curse of the earth, and the procurer of eternal death.

If his will remained unchanged, he would still be the servant of unrighteousness. But his will is renovated. He chooses holiness. His inclination is toward God. If he does evil, it is "the evil he would not." As Christ, in preparing salvation, did not destroy the law, but magnified it in the sight of heaven and earth; so the man who is saved by Christ delights in the law, and has his spirit moulded in conformity to it. God puts his law in his mind, and writes it in his heart. God enthrones himself in his heart. He has a principle of holiness that binds him to the eternal throne. He has a disposition, which, when delivered from remaining corruption, fits him for the habitation of perfect righteousness. His purpose and his heart are against sin. How could a scheme be better adapted to secure the renovation of man? How could the soul be inspired with a deeper devotion to the service of Heaven? What could present stronger attractions to the centre of light and purity? What else could thus make us "die unto sin and live unto righteousness?"

5. *Salvation by grace powerfully urges to holy obedience, on the principle of gratitude.* This is the doctrine of Christ. "To whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little." Great favors received awaken a deep sense of obligation to the benefactor. Look at the first emotions of the convert. His heart is alive with gratitude to God. The blessing of heaven, which he has received, appeals to his inmost soul with astonishing power. He breathes forth with an earnest spirit, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Here he is touched with motives that never lose their force. They are revived with new energy, whenever he reads the story of a Saviour's sufferings, and "looks unto the rock whence he was hewn, and the hole of the pit whence he was digged." His gratitude is awakened by a favor which infinite love only could bestow. His salvation is not owing to himself. He had nothing to merit it. The curse of a broken law rested on him. He lay slumbering, when destruction was hastening to seize him. Here grace reached him, opened his eyes, and delivered him from the yawning pit. No human arm could bring help. No angelic

might could roll away the curse and burst his chains. Entreaties of friendship and love, motives of three worlds, rolling time and a hastening eternity, could not move him. But he heard the voice of Almighty grace. This broke his stubborn heart, and brought him to the feet of Jesus. Such was his deliverance. Hence obligations arise and press upon him with the weight of infinite love. He feels that all his powers are not too much to give in return. Go, ask the humble, pardoned soul, if it is not so. Go, ask some praying, faithful disciple, if gratitude to his Redeemer does not inspire him in the service. Ask the multitude of saints on earth, if they cannot adopt the language of the Apostle, "The love of Christ constraineth us, that we should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and rose again." Ask the ransomed company who now sing in glory, if this principle of devotion does not reign in heaven. Listen to their anthem—"Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."

That the Gospel scheme of salvation leads to holiness, is evident,

6. *From the lives of Christians.* Here we must at last come to see what effect religion has upon the character. We appeal to the lives of the true followers of Jesus. They are epistles for Christ, known and read of all men. Here it is manifest that the principles of the Gospel embraced in the heart, are fitted to produce a holy life. Those that love God are the best men that live on the earth. Humility and meekness, those lovely traits of character, always accompany true piety. As they were characteristics of Christ, they are also of his disciples. Such are willing to esteem others better than themselves. It is their principle of action to forgive their enemies. Is not the real Christian the man who conquers the spirit of revenge under injury, and of malice towards them who cast reproach upon his name? Does he not feel it his province to endure patiently for "righteousness' sake?" This was the spirit of the primitive disciples. This was the temper of Paul. This same temper has been manifested by a host of christian worthies, who have had their names cast out as evil, and meekly resigned their bodies to the gibbet or the stake. Grace gives to the character the stamp of true excellence.

Christians are also eminently men of prayer. A follower of Christ was never known to live a prayerless life. Communion with Heaven is the strength and consolation of his heart. His spirit is attuned to fellowship with God. This is his holy employment, until he mounts to the scene of universal praise.

Christians are the most benevolent men. They love to do good. They are co-workers with God in the salvation of men. Every great effort to meliorate the condition of man, is the fruit of Christian zeal

and love. Are the friends of Christ the *last* to feel for the woes of humanity, and the crying wants of a world? Are their hearts the *last* to break? Who first stretches out the "melting hand of charity?" Where is the spring-head of the streams of mercy, that are now flowing in full tide over this land and the world? Whose voice is raised in loudest notes, in behalf of a perishing world? Who compose the sinew of every heaven-devised enterprise for man's welfare, in time and eternity? Whose heart leaps for joy at every new precursor of the resurrection of a world from spiritual death? Who says, my property is the Lord's, and I devote it to his service? Who says, my life is his, and all its energies shall be consecrated to him, until the last pulse shall beat? Who is ready to sacrifice domestic happiness, kindred and country, and waste beneath a torrid sun, to save undying souls? Religion has this honor in her devoted friends. The graves of Swartz, and Martyn, and Newell, will answer these questions. There is a loud response in the prayers, benevolence and self-denials of holy men at home; as well as in the consecration of every thing to the welfare of benighted heathen.

I can appeal with safety to you. Do not real Christians have "their fruit unto holiness?" Are not these the men, who have been ready to give up this present world, with its gains and honors?

Do you seek for men of integrity? Are not piety and dishonesty utterly incompatible? What, in one word, of purity, love and faith, could be found on the earth, if the church of the Redeemer were blotted from existence? Tell me not then that sin is the fruit of salvation by Christ. Cast not such reproach on our holy religion. There is sin enough in the world, and sin enough in the church, but charge it not on the principles of the Gospel. It is only through this scheme, that omnipotent grace comes to eradicate sin from the soul, and transform it, so that it can sing in seraphic ardor and purity before the throne.

This subject furnishes lessons of practical instruction. It teaches,

1. *That ungodly professors give no evidence of piety.* They who possess the grace of God, "are dead unto sin," and cannot "live any longer therein." As "every tree is known by its fruit, and a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit," the inference is plain, that an ungodly life bespeaks a heart destitute of piety. Christ is not the minister of sin. Grace is the enemy of ungodliness. What are your lives? Are you knowingly violating any of the commandments of God? Are you guilty of dishonesty or unfairness in trade, of withholding from others their due, of "grinding the faces of the poor," of encouraging intemperance, sabbath breaking, or slander, or of exciting discord among brethren? These sins write an awful sentence against you. If you indulge in any of them, how can the power of sin have

been dislodged in your heart? You feel not the power of sanctifying grace. Your heart does not burn with gratitude to that Redeemer, who died for sinners. The great design of the scheme of salvation is not manifest in you. I would address the solemn interrogation to your hearts,—Has the Gospel become the power of God to your salvation? What testimony does your life exhibit that you have been "born again?" Have you been brought to the feet of Jesus, in penitential sorrow for sin? What evidence could you find this moment to cheer you in the day of death? You are trying to make "fellowship between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial." It cannot be. Your profession is *nothing*, if sin is not forsaken. Instead of salvation from sin, you are yet in the "bonds of iniquity." There can be no grace within you. For if sin is yet predominant in the life, it also holds its supremacy in the heart. It has never yet been crushed. Corruption is yet alive in all its native vigor. Ungodly professors! tremble before the throne of Him who abhorreth iniquity.

2. *This subject presents to Christians the most powerful motives to cultivate holiness.* You are urged to flee from sin. You are redeemed for this very end, that you may be sanctified, and cleansed, and shine before the Lord in the beauties of holiness. God met you by his grace to deliver you from sin. You have the cross ever before you, where your pardon was bought with groans, and pains, and dying strifes. Go to that cross, and learn your obligations. You are also bound to a holy heaven. Slumber not, then, in the midst of corruption. Tamper not with temptation. Cleave not to this earth with such a death grasp. Do not wrap your souls in the mantle of idleness. Live as those redeemed by blood. Live as those allied to the throne of God; and shed on all around, the strong and convincing light of a holy character. You owe every thing to Christ. You resisted till his grace conquered. You were condemned, when Christ delivered you. You were a wanderer in the broad way to death, when he found you and brought you to his fold. How do grace and the cross and heaven teach you to live!

Seek to illustrate the appropriate tendency of the principles of the Gospel. Dishonor not your Master, by furnishing ground for the false imputation, that grace encourages censoriousness or any form of ungodliness. Instead of this, it challenges your every energy to the work of holy living. It summons you to the field of active benevolence. It lays all you have under contribution to the cause of Jesus. It calls you to spend this mortal life for God, until earth is exchanged for heaven.

3. *The case of the sinner is alarming, until he repents.* The Gospel proclaims salvation; but there is no salvation for a soul continuing in sin. "The Lord God is merciful and gracious"—but "*will*

by no means clear the guilty." Grace is free and full; and pardon is offered "without money and without price." But all this may be, and millions may rise from earth to heaven, to praise throughout eternity the God of their salvation, while your souls sink in unutterable wo. With the proposals of mercy which Christ makes, he still declares your inevitable ruin, unless your sins are abandoned. In spite of abounding grace you will perish. Salvation is dispensed from a throne, with which you are at war while you continue impenitent. You will be treated as an enemy forever, unless you make peace. Justice will shine with eternal splendor, in consigning you to endless despair. It is the pleasure of God, that "the wicked forsake his way." "Turn from your evil ways, for why will you die?" Break away from your sins. Repent, and life is certain. Refuse to repent, and there is no alternative but death. If you would gain heaven, you must become holy. Divine authority and love pursue you with this unalterable claim. Remaining in sin, that love can never save you; but "the wrath to come" must be found "without mixture" on your guilty soul.

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SERMON CCXLIV.

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FORGIVENESS OF OTHERS, A CONDITION OF THE DIVINE FORGIVENESS.

Matthew vi. 12. 14, 15.—*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.——For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*

The picture which our Saviour drew in one of his parables, is a picture of man. A poor debtor, who owed *ten thousand talents*, and had nothing to pay, fell down before his lord and cried for mercy. Yet when he had been forgiven, he went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him *a hundred pence;* and though that fellow servant fell down and cried for mercy, he would not forgive, but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.

Now, our Lord, knowing the unforgiving temper of man, has seen fit to annex to every prayer that we offer for forgiveness, a remarkable condition:—

"*Forgive us our debts,*—as we forgive our debtors."

I. As every man is supposed to be an offender against God, so every man is supposed *to have been in some way offended by his fellow men.* The world is so bad, that our Lord presumes nobody will be able to go through it, without feeling some inconvenience from the wicked, with whom he comes every day in contact in a thousand ways. He must be favored with a singular exemption from the common lot of men,—especially from the common lot of *good* men,—who can walk far in such a world as this, without being imposed

upon or defrauded; or without having his motives impeached, his character slandered, his sentiments misinterpreted or belied, and his very soul wrung with the unkindness and the injustice of his fellow men.

We often misunderstand our fellow men; and we are often misunderstood. Who does not know, how large a share of the enmities which arise between those who should be chief friends, is owing to some slight misapprehension, which a little candor, a little charity, and a little explanation in the outset, would have entirely cleared away? But when once ill blood is up, and the war of harsh words is begun, the closer the friendship has been, the more deadly now the war. "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." Often, too, a strife once kindled would go out, if there were no tale-bearers. But there are always enough to fan the fire. What began in a simple misunderstanding, thus often results in multiplied wrong.

With all the *wickedness* of which the world is so full,—with all the little *misunderstandings* to which fallible beings are so liable,—and with all the *ill-offices* of those who love to promote strife; it will be very strange if any man walks far in life, without being called to suffer some grievous wrong. "It must needs be that offences come." And this our Saviour takes for granted. But,

II. He requires every one, who comes to pray for forgiveness from God, to *give a bond, the penalty of which is damnation, that he will forgive his fellow men their trespasses, just as he asks the Lord to forgive his trespasses.*

"Forgive us our debts, *as we forgive our debtors.*" Certainly, he who uses this prayer, binds himself to forgive his fellow men their trespasses, on penalty of never finding forgiveness with God. Every sinner, who does not forgive his brother, utters his own condemnation every time that he thus prays for the divine forgiveness. "Forgive, as I forgive." The import of the prayer is, *if I fail to forgive, let me never be forgiven.* Our Lord is not satisfied with *declaring* that an unforgiving soul shall never be forgiven: he makes the transgressor utter his own doom; nay, put it in as a condition of his prayer; and *bind* himself to forgive, under the penalty of eternal perdition. And to make the matter absolutely certain; to cut off all hope of forgiveness from every one that will not forgive his neighbor; our Lord is careful to add these words: "For if ye for-

give not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

He added the same to the parable of the unmerciful servant, who received forgiveness for a debt of ten thousand talents, but would not pity and spare his fellow servant who owed him a hundred pence. "Then his Lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee? And his Lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. *So likewise* shall my heavenly Father *do also unto you*, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

He added the same sentiment, as he taught his disciples to have faith in prayer, on the occasion of the fig-tree withering at his word. "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any; that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, *neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.*"

So, here is one character that cannot be forgiven. An unforgiving man cannot obtain the forgiveness of God. And what must become of him who cannot be forgiven? The bible does not leave us in doubt: "*He shall have judgment without mercy, that showed no mercy.*" Think of this—"Judgment without mercy!" All his iniquities heaped upon his head; all remembered; all brought into the judgment! No Mediator to plead for him: no Redeemer's blood to atone for him: God will never forgive him. "He shall have judgment without mercy!"

For this reason, whoever comes to the altar with his gift, and there remembers that there is ill blood between him and his neighbor, must stop. He must first go and be reconciled to his brother. If he have entered into his closet; and there, when he is on his knees, remembers that he has in his heart any bitterness or grudge against his neighbor, he must beware how he asks for forgiveness. If he presumes to pray for pardon without forgiving his neighbor, he will, in effect, pray for the damnation of his own soul.

But our wicked hearts are so prone to wicked evasions, that, in order to be safe, it is necessary for us to inquire further concerning the reach of this bond to forgive.

III. How, then, according to the condition of this prayer, are we to forgive our debtors?

1. *Freely:* just as we wish God to forgive us. Your neighbor has offended. He has grievously and inexcusably wronged you. He deserves punishment. If it were not so, there would be no need of forgiveness: simple justice would make all right. But suppose he has grievously injured you,—wronged you in your property,—insulted you,—slandered you. The sentiment of this wicked world says, Resent it: revenge it. The Gospel says, Forgive. Forgive *freely*. Be not strict to ask for an honorable amend. Suppose the offender is in your power. Suppose you can make him smart for the wrong, or buy his peace dearly. Suppose you can, by simply telling the truth, cover him with shame, and make the world despise him. Suppose he has given ample provocation, and amply deserves it. What then? Your wicked heart can, if it will, take sweet revenge. It will whisper you, that it is not so much vengeance as doing the offender justice. This wicked world may tell you it is all right. But what says the Gospel? "Forgive." Forbear all vengeance. Do not unnecessarily expose him. Do not wound his feelings, any more than the kindest concern for his present and eternal good would prompt you to do. Treat him not as an enemy, but as a brother whom you are anxious to spare; whose reputation you wish to preserve. Take the necessary steps to bring him to repentance; but do it as to a beloved brother or son.

If you say, "I will forgive him, but I will make him smart a little for his wickedness: I will take a little revenge first, and make him pay for his exemption from worse punishment;"—is this as you wish the Lord to deal by you? So you must pray. You are bound to make the condition express; "Forgive me my debts, *as I forgive my debtors.*" By this rule, you are bringing yourself into trouble. According to your own prayer, God may have to strip you of your property; blast your prospects; leave you to such courses as will ruin your reputation; lay you on a bed of lingering sickness; or cut down your children or dearest friends by death. You bind yourself by your prayer to all this. Possibly this is not the worst of the case. God may esteem you one who does not forgive; and he may hold on to the bond, which you give in prayer, never to be forgiven! Forgive *freely*. Forbear all vengeance; all retaliation; all attempts to injure the offender's character. You are on ground, over which the Lord

has seen fit to draw the provisions of his law with exceeding strictness. "Vengeance is *mine ;* I will repay, saith the Lord." Slight is the injury which your revenge can inflict on him who has injured you; but, according to your prayer for forgiveness, it destroys your own soul.

2. Forgive *great wrongs.* So you wish to be forgiven of God. You owe ten thousand talents, and have nothing to pay. You must be indebted to a pardon that forgives sins worthy of everlasting death, or you must spend your eternity in hell. This is the forgiveness that you want of God. What wrongs so great has your neighbor committed against you? Say not, "He has deserved punishment: he does not deserve to be forgiven." Say not, "He has done so wickedly, that I cannot bear it: I cannot forgive it." Where would *you* be, if *great* wrongs could not be forgiven? Where would you be, if no one that richly deserves punishment, must ever find pardon? God will hold you to your bond. If you could not forgive the great offences of your neighbor, then your great offences cannot be forgiven.

3. *Be ready to forgive unasked: be the first to seek reconciliation with an offender.*

Some people are apt to say, "I am ready to forgive, as soon as he asks my forgiveness, with suitable reparation and acknowledgments." At first view this looks very reasonable. But God so loved the world, that *while we were yet enemies*, Christ died for the ungodly. No voice of supplication had ascended to his ear. There were none ready to return and to seek God, crying, "Father, we have sinned." There were none ready to think of making reparation for the wrong: and had they done so, no reparation could have been made. Then God, of his own overflowing kindness, came *to seek* us, *when we were lost.* And still he *pursues* us with his love. While we are obstinate in rebellion, he *pleads* with us; he *beseeches* us by his mercies to turn and live. "Did ever mercy stoop so low." Was ever pardon offered at so costly an expense? God did not forbear the condescension. He did not forbear the sacrifice. He was the first to seek reconciliation with offending worms of the dust.

Say,—if you proudly and coldly stand aloof from your offending brother, waiting for him to make the first advances towards reconciliation, because he is the offender; if your proud heart prompts you to stand for your honor, and thinks it beneath your dignity to bow

itself with kind offers of reconciliation to that unworthy and offending brother;—can you hope to be forgiven? If you make this a condition of forgiving your brother, God may make it a condition of forgiving you. He may cease to pursue you with his Spirit. He may give you up to your own heart's lust, to walk in your own counsels, and then you are as surely lost, as though you were already in hell. Be careful lest your endeavor to maintain your dignity end in the eternal ruin of your soul. God will certainly bring down that naughtiness of heart. Beware how you say, "Forgive me my debts as I forgive my debtors," with such a temper. Beware lest you ensnare your own soul.

4. *Forgive repeated wrongs.*

"Why, this man has been so constantly doing wrong, that I am tired of forgiving him. I have lost all patience." How natural are such thoughts to the carnal heart! Peter thought he had stretched forgiveness very far, when he had extended it to the seventh offence. "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times; but, until seventy times seven:" and immediately he uttered the parable of the unforgiving servant, to warn his disciples against an unforgiving spirit.

He knew our proneness to revenge: our punctiliousness respecting insults: and our ungodly notions of dignity, and of "proper resentment." He knew our dangers: and therefore said, "*Take heed* to yourselves:" as if he had said, Look out for special dangers here: "TAKE HEED to yourselves; if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him."

Where would *you* be; you who have lost all charity and all patience, and are tired of forgiving your oft offending brother; where would you be, if God's patience were wearied out? Where would you be, if God could never forgive those whose offences are multiplied as the waves of the sea? Are you willing to cut yourself off from all forgiveness, if you have sinned as many times as seventy times seven? If not, then beware how you refuse to forgive a brother who has often offended. You bind yourself by your very prayer, to receive the measure which you mete to others: "And with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

5. Forgive *from the heart.* How often do people say, "I can forgive, but I cannot forget?" In other words, "I can forbear outward acts of retaliation; I can *say* I forgive; but I cannot root the bitter feeling from my heart."

Our Lord has been very careful to aim a thunderbolt against this refuge of lies. "And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye, *from your heart*, forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." Simply *saying*, "I forgive," will not do. Simply forbearing revenge, will not do. The Lord would have us root out all wrath, and malice, and unkind feelings, from the soul. All bitter recollection of the injury is to be effaced. The waters of oblivion should close over the wrong, and hide it forever. So God forgives. "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and *their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*" "He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; *and thou will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.*"

If we would be the sons and daughters of the Highest; if we would have God wipe away all tears from our eyes, and the Lamb feed us and lead us to living fountains in heaven; we must beware not to deceive ourselves with saying, "I can forgive, but I cannot forget." What if *God* should remember our sins, and retain his secret anger forever? There could be no heaven to us. We *must* forget. If memory cannot forget things that are once past, the *heart* must not remember: or if it does, it must be only with love and pity for the offender; and, with rejoicing for ourselves, that we have an opportunity of imitating our Father who is in heaven.

REFLECTIONS.

1. With what fearful rigor the Gospel represses a malicious and revengeful spirit! "He that *hateth* his brother, is a *murderer*." He that shall use the language of reproach or of railing against his brother, is "in danger of hell-fire." And here, to cut up all malice and bitterness and revenge by the very roots; our Lord requires us, when we pray, to bind ourselves to forgive,—to forgive from the heart,—under penalty of never being forgiven of God! It must be that he saw in the human heart a great propensity to malice and bitterness and revenge. It must be that such a temper is exceedingly

loathsome in his sight, and utterly incompatible with salvation. His Gospel is fitted for such a world of offences as this; and for just such proud, high spirited, irascible beings, as fallen men. Therefore it is, that the Gospel abounds with such injunctions as these: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and evil speaking, and clamor, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you." "Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind,—meekness, long-suffering: forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

2. *It is a serious thing to pray for forgiveness.* That prayer is inseparable from the condition, "As we forgive our debtors." It will be of no use to omit the condition, though conscious guilt may prompt us to do so. If we forget the condition, God will not. Think, then, what must be the prayer of the duellist; when—as he knows not but he stands on the brink of the eternal world, and feels himself unfit to die,—he secretly lifts up his heart with the prayer, "Forgive my trespasses." Oh that awful condition, "*As I forgive!*" And he stretches out his hand to destroy his brother! This is the way he forgives! His prayer turns into the most horrible imprecation of wrath upon his own soul: "So let God visit me with his wrath: so let God destroy my soul, as I aim to destroy my brother!"

Let those, too, tremble, who can go to law, merely to avenge a little wrong or a little insult; or to harrass and vex a neighbor against whom they entertain a grudge. Do such people ever reflect that they are cutting themselves off from the mercy of God? They cannot pray, without bringing their souls under a bond of perdition. *Can* such a man pray? Will he *dare* to utter before God the fearful words, "Forgive me my debts, as I forgive my debtors?" Heaven will not endure the presumptuous mockery. The mercy-seat changes into a throne of judgment. Clouds and darkness frown around it; and amid lightnings of wrath and thunders of wo, the sentence is heard, "He shall have judgment without mercy, that showed no mercy."

Oh then, tremble too, ye who have a standing *in the church of Christ*, but who cannot commune together, nor pray together, nor labor for Christ together! If you cannot repair the wrong, can you not *forgive?* How can you live a day in such a condition that you

cannot pray, without perhaps calling down vengeance on your own souls? How dare you let the sun go down upon your wrath? Two aged and eminent Christians, in the early days of Christianity, were at variance. It was a grievous matter. The world could not have devised a way to prevent an eternal hatred. But towards evening one sent to the other this touching message, "*Brother, the sun is near going down.*" They remembered the injunction of holy writ, "Let not the sun go down upon your wrath:" and they were reconciled. How can *you* let the sun go down upon your wrath, when you cannot pray without imprecating upon your soul the wrath of God!

Remember that the condition of this prayer is not to be evaded. People sometimes have the heart to work ill to their neighbor, where they have not the courage to do so directly. They would gladly have the mischief done, but they wish to avoid the thunderbolts of the law, or the dread rebuke of public sentiment. They begin no slander, but they love to hear an ill report of their neighbor. They say nothing; save to help it on by words of mischief that shall seem innocent. They love to see the mischief working against the one who has offended them; but they abound in exclamations of regret. With many professions of pity, they secretly rejoice in their neighbor's shame and downfall. They think no eye of holy indignation seeth them. But such artifice escapes not the notice of the heart-searching God. They will be held to the bond in their prayer for forgiveness. In addition to the woes that come upon an unforgiving temper, they will be called to meet an account of hypocrisy and lies.

3. *How very few forgive as they need to be forgiven.* Oh, how much men need forgiveness from God! It is not one or two offences that they want forgiven; but a whole life of rebellion and aggravated insult. They have treated God's laws with contempt; though he has promulgated them with the most solemn pomp, and sanctioned them with everlasting penalties. They have treated their Maker,—the Lord of heaven and earth, who only can kill or make alive,—as though he were beneath their notice. Talk of what he may,—of justice or of mercy, of life or death, of heaven or hell,—they treat him as though his Yea and Amen were mere idle words. A little momentary pleasure, a few dollars and cents, weigh more heavily on their minds than all the promises and all the warnings of Jehovah.

Yet, oh, they want forgiveness! and forgiveness that will come

without their seeking it! forgiveness that will allow them to sin on, till the last gasp of life! They are willing to take forgiveness that cost the great Jehovah the sacrifice of his Son; and that cost the Redeemer his life. They want iniquities forgiven,—yea, they want iniquities washed out with blood,—that deserve no less than everlasting imprisonment amid the torments of hell. Unless they are forgiven, they must suffer all this. Unless they are ransomed with a price beyond silver and gold, and with a greater sacrifice than the cattle on a thousand hills, with all Lebanon to burn, they must "dwell with everlasting burnings." This is the forgiveness which man needs; and this is the forgiveness which he asks of God.

But is that guilty being, who wishes to be indebted so much to the forgiveness of God, ready to forgive his fellow men? Is he ready to exercise that "charity," which "hopeth all things," when *judging* of his neighbor? Is he willing to forgive and forget great wrongs, repeated seventy times seven? Is he ready to make any sacrifices and to suffer any thing, rather than remember and revenge the injuries which he has received from his brother?

Alas, no! He is ready to put the worst construction on his neighbor's conduct. He esteems it a point of honor to resent all wrongs; to stand off coldly, and wait till the offender first seeks reconciliation, and makes satisfaction to the uttermost.

Oh! let us ever remember under what a solemn bond we pray for forgiveness! As often as we come to this petition, let us solemnly pause; and before we utter it, inquire,—Is my heart in such a state, that I can safely say, O Lord, *forgive me, even as I forgive others their trespasses?*

SERMON CCXLV.

BY REV. EDWIN HALL.

THE NATURE AND SPIRIT OF THE PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS.

MATT. iv. 12.—"*And forgive us our debts.*"

OUR Lord designed this petition for all men, because "all have sinned." The Gospel recognizes none as righteous;—"no, not one." All have, therefore, occasion to pray, "Forgive us our debts."

We will inquire,

I. WHAT THIS PRAYER MEANS;

II. HOW IT IS TO BE MADE.

1. Whoever uses this prayer, *confesses himself guilty and undone.* The whole Gospel proceeds upon this ground. Its great topics are, "*atonement*," "*forgiveness*," "*mercy*," "*grace*," "*salvation.*" These have no appropriateness, save to the guilty and the lost. And, in so dreadful a controversy between God and his creatures, there can be no question who is in the wrong:—we are *righteously* condemned, and *lost by our own iniquities.*

The prayer under consideration makes this confession of sin. Whoever uses it, must be speechless in the judgment. He has known his sin: he has confessed it. His very prayer testifies against him, as a sinner, and will be recognized in the judgment as a confession of his guilt.

If the petitioner does not mean this, then he speaks lies in hypocrisy.

He virtually charges God with fraud in the whole frame work of his Gospel;—with falsehood in his declarations concerning the guilt of man; with cruelty in the punishment which he inflicts in this world, and which he threatens to inflict in the world to come. He treats the great Jehovah as a being who can be pleased with insincere acknowledgments: with fawning—hollow hearted confessions, that outrage all justice and all truth.

There is no escape from this. If we use the prayer, we make such a confession, as will make us speechless in the judgment; or else, we are intentionally guilty of all this daring mockery of the ever-living God.

2. *We renounce in this petition, all pretence of making satisfaction for our sins.* We plead no merit: we throw ourselves upon mere mercy: we simply ask forgiveness.

Some people seem to think, that their endeavors to do the best they can for the future, will be set off against their past offences; and that they may cancel their sins by extraordinary merit. Or, if they have no merit beyond their present duty, they fancy that if they do their duty for a long time, God will by degrees forget their past offences. But this is not seeking *forgiveness.* This is not taking the benefit of *atonement.* This is not asking for *pardon:* it is endeavoring to make *satisfaction.* And to every one who resorts to this mode of salvation, by deeds of law, the Lord will *give law;* and not mercy. They are under the curse. They are fallen from the dispensation of grace, and must stand or fall by the law. "As many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse;"—"Christ shall profit you nothing:"—"Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are *fallen* from grace." But the prayer under consideration renounces all pretence of making satisfaction. We come to God making no plea but for *mercy:* endeavoring neither to palliate our guilt nor to atone for it. We come seeking *forgiveness:*—such forgiveness as will make us immeasurably indebted to the mere mercy of God.

3. We seek, under the name of forgiveness, *the remission of punishment.* I should never have thought of making this remark, had I not

heard it gravely asserted, that there is never any forbearance of punishment: that every sin is punished just as much as it deserves! According to this newly invented Gospel, God is so merciful that he will *remit* sins by punishing them! *forgive*, by holding on to the penalty! *atone* for sins by the bloody sacrifice of his Son, and yet make no difference in his treatment of the sinner! The mighty work of *redemption;* the astonishing exhibition of God's mercy through the *propitiation* of Christ; the *pardon*, the *grace*, the *forgiveness*, the *mercy* of the Gospel, the *glad tidings* of great joy, that make earth glad and fill heaven with wonder;—all amount at last, (according to this theory,) to nothing more than this,—God treats the sinner just as he would have done, without all this mighty movement! Justice takes its course! Mercy, forgiveness, pardon, remission of sins,—are mere names; they make no alteration in the course of God's treatment of the sinner! Salvation by *grace* is simply salvation by *justice!*

Verily this is another Gospel! Its design seems to be, not to persuade men to *flee* from wrath, but to make up their minds to BEAR it. But this is not the Gospel. The Gospel declares that "Christ hath *redeemed* us from the *curse* of the law." The lord who *forgave* his servant ten thousand talents, did not, as the act of forgiveness, cast him into prison till he should pay the uttermost farthing; he treated him as though he *owed him nothing*. So "being justified by the blood" of Jesus, "we shall be *saved from wrath*, through him." Oh, the encouraging intimation of *forgiveness* furnished in this direction for prayer! "God will be merciful to our unrighteousness, and *our sins he will remember no more*." "He that heareth Christ's word, and believeth on him, hath everlasting life, and *shall not come into condemnation*." God for Christ's sake hath freely *forgiven him*. For "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son. that whosoever believeth in him *should not perish* but have everlasting life."

This is what our Lord teaches us to ask for in the petition, "Forgive us our debts." This is the forgiveness that we need, and this is the forgiveness of the Gospel.

II. How is this prayer to be made?

It is to be made, *admitting the full charge which God has brought*

against us in his word;—pleading guilty to the very thing charged; —allowing our guilt in its full enormity; and turning to God by repentance, and with faith in Jesus Christ.

It is to be feared, that many, who repeat the Lord's prayer, have very little notion of admitting themselves to be such sinners, that God would be just in sending them to hell. They are willing to confess that they are not *perfectly* righteous: there is a sort of *misunderstanding* between them and their God, which they would be glad to have made up; but they have very little idea of prostrating themselves before God's awful throne as *hell-deserving sinners*. Their prayer means about as much, as is implied, when one has inadvertently incommoded his neighbor, and says, very civilly, "*Please excuse me.*"

Now the controversy of God with us is of a more serious nature than this. In his view, we are altogether unholy and vile; deserving of perdition; and fit only to be banished from his presence forever. Though he is pitiful, and ready to show mercy, yet our desert is such, that his frown must shroud this earth as with the mantle of death, or his displeasure is not sufficiently manifested. So heinous is our sin, that not a son or daughter of Adam can be delivered from eternal wrath, without an adequate atonement. "Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission." All the beasts of the field are not sufficient for sacrifice; nor is Lebanon sufficient to burn. Angels were not able to break the seals of our condemnation. There was found none in heaven that was able to open the book or to look thereon, till God's own Son cried,—Father, spare the sinner: I give my life a ransom. He died to save them that were *lost*. And to save from what a punishment! Oh, sinner,—read in that wrath which burns with eternal fire, the estimate which God puts upon the sins that you regard so lightly!

Now, the Lord God must be vindicated in all this. Our cry for forgiveness must not be the cry of those who are willing to escape from cruelty by suing out a formal pardon. From the very heart, we must *condemn ourselves*, as God condemns us. We must *loathe ourselves*, as the Lord loathes the ungodly. We must confess the *full amount* of the sins with which we stand charged. We must confess their full *enormity*, as evinced by the serious manner in which God regards them. We must confess them with abhorrence. Our cry for pardon

must not be the light apology,—"Please excuse me,"—but the heart burthened prayer of the publican, who "*smote his breast, saying*, GOD BE MERCIFUL TO ME A SINNER." Our prayer must be the cry of contrition and deep repentance, or it will avail nothing.

Some persons can say carelessly, "Why, I repent every day: I never sin but I am sorry for it." Ah! do you *forsake* your sins? Do you utterly renounce them, and turn from them with loathing? Is your heart broken? Do you now dread falling into sin, as you would dread falling into hell? This trifling sorrow, that does not subdue the soul, —that does not melt the heart,—that does not change the temper or the life,—is any thing rather than the repentance of the Bible. If you do not *loathe* sin; if you are only sorry for the shame, while you love the sin as well as ever; you are not a true penitent before God. This is only the sorrow of the world, that worketh death.

Oh, how often, dying sinner, have you said, "Forgive me my debts," while you had not a spark of godly sorrow!—while you scarce thought on your heinous guilt, or formed the slightest purpose of forsaking the sins for which you asked pardon! Then you mocked your God. Then you plunged yourself deeper in guilt. And yet, this saying the prayer, "Forgive," perhaps warded off alarm from your mind, and conviction from your conscience. O, let not your prayer be a mere mockery of God, and a means of hardening and deluding your own soul. Rather take the open ground of rebellion; spurn forgiveness; and *know* your standing;—and if you *will* rush upon the thick bosses of the Almighty's buckler, do it with your eyes open. Then, peradventure, some awful perception of danger may flash upon your soul, and make you relent before your doom is for ever sealed.

And how important to you is it, dying fellow sinner, that you immediately find forgiveness! In a little time your health will fail. The world will fade from your eyes. You must leave your business; your wealth; your friends; your pleasures; and go into eternity. You must appear before God in judgment. The books will be opened. The books that contain the record of your years, and months, and days, and hours:—the books that record your manner of life; your words; your deeds; your plans; your influence; your conduct in your stewardship here. All that God has done for you will be brought to mind. His

earnest invitations; his many warnings; his solemn commands;—every thing will be brought to light. The Redeemer,—who died for you, and who waited so long to save you,—will then plead against you. You are condemned. Heaven is lost. You relent; but it is too late. You cry for mercy; but you are not answered. Your eternity begins with despair. The Almighty—the Eternal—the unchangeable God has pronounced your doom. It can never be reversed. Are you prepared to endure all this? Can your heart endure, or your hands be strong?

O, learn from the scenes of Calvary—learn from the opening records of eternity, of what moment it is, that you find pardon now: and with all the earnestness that the case demands, cry unto God for help. Come in the only way: by the cross of Christ. Trust in the Almighty Redeemer. Let go every other shield. View yourself as open to the thunderbolts of incensed justice, and let Christ be your only defence. Have done with all delay. Break at once from every yoke of Satan.—Fear not man that shall die—Fear none but God. Flee—flee—an undone wretch—for pardon—that you may lay hold on eternal life.

Will you *thus* pray for pardon? Will you pray *now*? As we bow before the throne of infinite love, will you now give yourself up to God?

"Now is the time he bends his ear,
And waits for your request;
Come; lest he rouse his wrath, and swear,
Ye shall not see my rest."

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SERMON CCXLVI.

BY REV. EDWIN F. HATFIELD,

New York.

BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Acts 1: 5.— *Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.*

Baptism is of two kinds:—of water, and of the Spirit. The one is an emblem of the other; but the latter is, by no means, an inseparable attendant of the former. The value of the former arises from its connexion with the latter; "for as the body without the spirit is dead," so baptism by water becomes an empty ceremony, when it is viewed by itself, without regard to the baptism of the Spirit.

Water-baptism has received much and critical attention. Every thing, that could be brought to bear upon the subject, has been most thoroughly investigated, as of the utmost importance. It may well be questioned, whether any mere outward ceremony should be regarded with such general and absorbing interest. It tends greatly to mar the fair proportions of truth, and to cast the thing signified into the shade. Such, it is to be feared, has been the result. But how seldom do we hear or read of the Baptism of the Holy Ghost? This it is, after all, that should call out the feelings, and kindle up the thoughts of those who seek the promotion of Christ's kingdom. If every subject is worthy of consideration in proportion to its importance, then, judging by the interest with which the shadow has been regarded, this, the substance, should have engrossed the spiritual

energies of God's people in every age. Is it right to think and speak more of John the Baptist, than of Jesus the Saviour? So thought not John himself. "He that cometh after me is preferred before me. I indeed baptize you with water, but *he* shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire." Such were the declarations of John. How insignificant, even in his own view, was the office to which he was so successfully and honorably devoted, compared with that of him, whose alone was the office of baptizing with the Holy Ghost! "He must increase, but I must decrease."

Let me then turn your thoughts from John to Jesus—from the peculiar province of one, as a forerunner, a baptizer with water, to that of the other as a baptizer *indeed*—a purifier, not of the body only, or chiefly, but of the soul. Be this our theme—THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST.

Let us inquire,

What is it?

Is it now attainable?

What are some of its consequences?

What will secure it?

When may we look for it?

I. WHAT IS MEANT BY THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY GHOST? The words are plainly figurative. John had been accustomed to baptize with water; as the outward sign of spiritual cleansing. More than this he could not do—the heart he could not wash. Jesus could. *He* could pour upon the heart such a flood of light and love, that the work would be done. "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost," of which this water is an emblem. Not that the Holy Ghost—a pure, intelligent, omnipresent Being—can be literally poured out like water; but that the influences of that Spirit, the blessings of his presence or favor, would be freely communicated by Jesus to the sons of men. Nor, that these influences of the Spirit would be visible to the eye of mortals: but that the happy subjects of this baptism should

thus be purified from sin, and led, in a remarkable manner, to the maintenance of a holy life. It is something more than is common, in the course of nature, of the presence of the Divine Spirit. It is an intercourse established between God and the soul of man—an intimate communion, an abiding, sensible fellowship—so intimate, that they occupy, in the most delightful union, the same dwelling. "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God?"

Such is the baptism of the Holy Ghost in a single case. When the instances of these baptisms are greatly multiplied, in the same region, and about the same time; when whole masses—as it were, of a community are simultaneously moved as by one all-pervading mind to seek the favor of God—we are accustomed to speak of such an event as a REVIVAL OF RELIGION; that is, an extraordinary baptism of the Holy Ghost. Such an event occurred very shortly after the prediction, which we are now considering. It was principally to these extraordinary baptisms that the Saviour referred, when he said, as in the text, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." "The Acts of the Apostles" may justly be regarded as the commentary of the Spirit on this promise of the Saviour.

It, therefore, becomes a question of great practical interest,

II. IS THIS BAPTISM NOW ATTAINABLE? Have we as much reason to look for such events now, as in the days of Peter and Paul? Yes, and more. We may not, indeed, expect that the days of miracles will return, that those thus baptized will speak with tongues, and cast out devils, and raise the dead. But we may expect, that men will be baptized, (and not the less for the want of these powers,) in greater number than in any former age of the world.

Let it be remembered, that the gift of the Holy Spirit is the sum of all the blessings, purchased for man by the blood of Jesus. It is the substance and the fulfilment of the promises, both of the Old and New Testaments. It is the subject-matter of the ancient prophecies and of the covenant of grace. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh,

and *I will put my Spirit within you*, and cause you to walk in my statutes." This, it was foretold, would especially characterize the days of the second covenant. "I will *pour out my Spirit* unto you." "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will *pour my Spirit* upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." "Until the *Spirit be poured* upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field." "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out *my Spirit* upon all flesh. In those days will I *pour out my Spirit*." As we have already seen, it was this which chiefly attracted the notice of John, as characterizing the time of the Saviour's reign—"the kingdom of heaven." It was of this, principally, that the Redeemer discoursed in his last conference with his disciples, previous to his death. The text is but a repetition of the promise made in that tender and affecting interview.

In short, the gift of the Holy Spirit is the sum and substance of the last will and testament of our Lord Jesus Christ—his grand and abiding legacy to his church. So far was he from confining the visits of this Divine Being to the apostolic age, that he entailed the legacy on every succeeding age to the end of time. "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever." It is therefore, with great propriety, that the whole period, intervening between his first and second coming, has been familiarly characterized as *the dispensation of the Spirit.*

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord," the kingdom of Christ is to be advanced in this world. Wherever, therefore, the cause of the Redeemer progresses, there the Holy Ghost is given. But we are taught that this kingdom is yet to extend "from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same"—until "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord"—until "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun seven-fold"—until "kings shall be nursing fathers, and their queens nursing mothers" in Zion. We are told that the time is coming, when "all flesh shall come and worship before the Lord;" when "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him;" when "they shall no more

teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they shall all know him from the least to the greatest." The time is yet to come, when there shall be heard "great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

As, therefore, this mighty renovation is to be effected through the agency of the Holy Spirit, we may confidently expect, that, as this period of spiritual glory advances, there will be baptisms of the Holy Ghost, more frequent, more abundant, and far more extensive than in the apostolic age. Yea, that there will be such outpourings of the Spirit in those days, that "the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." What, then, is to prevent our cherishing the hope of such blessings even now?

That you may have a glowing, unquenchable desire for such baptism from on high, consider,

III. WHAT ARE SOME OF ITS CONSEQUENCES? When the heavens are bowed, and God comes down to earth, when the Divine Spirit enters the human heart, and there sets up his throne, and there holds the most free, tender, endearing intercourse, it can surely be no just cause for surprise, if large, unwonted, overwhelming communications of love, and manifestations of God in the glory of his holiness, are enjoyed by the highly favored subject of this grace. It would be exceedingly strange if it were not so. If the believer is made to possess a joy to which he was before almost a stranger—a joy to which he can find no parallel in his own previous experience —it is by no means marvelous that to others, not thus favored, his "words should seem as idle tales."

1. First, then, *Christians may expect large measures of love and joy.* "He that believeth on me," saith the Saviour, "out of his belly shall flow *rivers* of living water. But this spake he of the SPIRIT, which they that believe on him should receive." Is this the privilege of *every believer?* May every disciple's soul become a living fountain of joy, sending forth its "rivers of living water?" What, then, may not he expect, who has sought and obtained an extraordinary baptism of the Holy Ghost? And are not believers

exhorted to be *filled with the Spirit?* and to be *filled with all the fulness of God?* The very name by which the Redeemer introduced this Divine Guest is indicative of his work. "I will not leave you comfortless; I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another COMFORTER." And not only so, but so much greater blessings were to be communicated to the disciples through this new and abiding companion, that the Redeemer regarded this fact alone as sufficient to warrant his own departure: "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him." Yea, more than this; inasmuch as they had not yet asked for this Comforter, he tells them, "hitherto have ye asked *nothing* in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." And they found it so, when, having sought and waited "for the promise of the Father," they could say, "THE COMFORTER IS COME." What a joy then filled their hearts?—a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." In the midst of enemies thirsting for their blood, their peace was like a river—"the peace of God, which passeth all understanding."

But the Apostles have not been the only recipients of these favors. In every subsequent age there have been at least a few followers of the Son of God, who have obtained similar baptisms of the Holy Ghost. Some have left, for our confirmation, a record of what the Lord had done for their souls in these visits of grace. Look, for example, at the case of that eminent lady, Mrs. EDWARDS, wife of the venerable President EDWARDS. Having sought and obtained, in the year 1742, the extraordinary presence of the Holy Spirit, she describes her feelings in the following words: "I cannot find language to express how *certain* the everlasting love of God appeared—the everlasting mountains and hills were but shadows to it. My safety, and happiness, and eternal enjoyment of God's immutable love, seemed as durable and unchangeable as God himself. Melted and overcome by the sweetness of this assurance, I fell into a great flow of tears, and could not forbear weeping aloud. The presence of God was so near, and so real, that I seemed scarcely conscious of any thing else. I seemed to be taken under the care and charge of my God and Saviour, in an inexpressibly endearing manner. The peace and happiness which I hereafter felt was altogether inexpressible. The whole world, with all its enjoyments, and all its troubles,

seemed to be nothing;—my God was my all, my only portion. No possible suffering appeared to be worth regarding: all persecutions and torments were a mere nothing. At night my soul seemed to be filled with an inexpressibly sweet and pure love to God, and to the children of God; with a refreshing consolation and solace of soul which made me willing to lie on the earth, at the feet of the servants of God, to declare his gracious dealings with me, and breathe forth before them my love, and gratitude, and praise."

On another occasion she says, "All night I continued in a constant, clear, and lively sense of the heavenly sweetness of Christ's excellent and transcendent love, of his nearness to me, and of my dearness to him, with an inexpressibly sweet calmness of soul in an entire rest in him. I seemed to myself to perceive a glow of divine love come down from the heart of Christ in heaven, into my heart, in a constant stream, like a stream or pencil of sweet light. At the same time, my heart and soul all flowed out in love to Christ; so that there seemed to be a constant flowing and reflowing of heavenly and divine love; from Christ's heart to mine; and I appeared to myself to float or swim in these bright, sweet beams of the love of Christ, like the motes swimming in the beams of the sun. My soul remained in a heavenly elysium. I think that what I felt each minute during the continuance of the whole time, was worth more than all the outward comfort and pleasure which I had enjoyed in my whole life put together. It was a pure delight which fed and satisfied the soul. It was a sweetness which my soul was lost in."

Day after day this sweet experience continued almost without interruption for a long period. Once in the house of God, "So conscious was I," she says, "of the joyful presence of the Holy Spirit, that I could scarcely refrain from leaping with transports of joy. My soul was filled and overwhelmed with light, and love, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and seemed just ready to go away from the body. I had, in the mean time, an overwhelming sense of the glory of God, as the Great Eternal All, and of the happiness of having my own will entirely subdued to his will. This exaltation of soul subsided into a heavenly calm, and a rest of soul in God, which was even sweeter than what preceded it. My mind remained so much in a similar frame for more than a week, that I could never think of it

without an inexpressible sweetness in my soul." The expression of a neighbor, "One smile of Christ is worth a thousand million pounds," affected her so exceedingly, that she says, "I had a strong sense of the grossness of the comparison; and it only astonished me that any one could compare a smile of Christ to any earthly treasure."

In this manner this dear saint continued to enjoy, for a long period, these "*Riches of Full assurance*"—*this Baptism of the Holy Ghost.* Indeed, she never lost the savor of that visit. And what is there in this that is unreasonable? What is it but that, of which Paul spoke, when he said, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as *by the Spirit of the Lord?*" This is, indeed, "a well of water springing up to everlasting life," and sending forth "rivers of living water." God give to every one of you such a baptism! Who, in view of it, does not exclaim—

"Our longing souls aloud would sing,—
Spring up, celestial fountain, spring!"

When this blessing descends upon a community of Christians, it may also be expected that,

2. *Hypocrites will be exposed.* When the graces of a church are at a low ebb, when the world has greatly intruded upon the heritage of the Lord, when the wall of separation is very much broken down, it is a comparatively easy thing for a hypocrite to maintain a reputable standing in the house of God. Like the magicians of Egypt, who found no difficulty with a few of the first miracles of Moses and Aaron, Satan can succeed very well in the attempt to counterfeit common gifts and graces. But when it comes to the Baptism of the Holy Ghost, he is constrained to cry, "This is the finger of God."

In every church, however small, there may be a Judas. In every large church there are, it is to be feared, many professors, who, if they hold on their way, will most certainly arrive at the gates of hell. No sinners are more inaccessible. Speak to the unconverted, and these of course are happy in thinking that they are not of the number. Let the church be reproved for their formality and coldness,

and these will often join with you in the rebuke; for none have so good an opinion of themselves as they. Now when a church has been baptized from above, and their fellow-professors are making rapid progress in the way to heaven, hypocrites soon faint and grow weary. They may keep pace with others a while, but presently they lag behind, give over the pursuit, and begin to consult their ease. And now they find fault with their brethren for not stopping in like manner, for running too fast, for laboring so hard, for praying so much, for over-urgency in the effort to bring sinners speedily to seek God. "The day cometh, that shall burn as an oven." "He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with *fire*." The Spirit of God is like a glowing flame. "For our God is a consuming fire." The fire will scorch and burn as well as melt. The same fire that melts the soul of the Christian, until he overflows with love, will scorch and wither the hypocrite. And now he will writhe under the beams of truth. He becomes mad, spiteful, infuriated; he raves and denounces his brethren and the work of the Lord. He creates a party in the church, or in the community, who band together, like the forty of Jerusalem in the days of Paul, to put down the devoted servants of the cross. Thus it was with those noted hypocrites in the Jewish church—the Pharisees—in the time of the Apostles. Thus it has ever been where God has marvelously poured out his Spirit. This it was that drove President *Edwards* from Northampton—that shut the pulpits of England and America, in many cases, against that eminent servant of Christ, *George Whitefield*—and that has shut out many eminent saints from the hearts and houses of their brethren.

But this opposition will not always assume so decided a tone. It may be too great a venture openly to attack, and unblushingly to rail. The preacher and the cause may be too popular with the common people—too evidently blessed of God. Then the same temper expresses itself in doubtful surmises, in dark insinuations, in cold looks, and in secret plots. In some few cases, these hypocrites will give up their hopes; some will obtain "a good hope through grace;" others, after a while, will cling to their old hopes again, and wax worse and worse. They may find their situations so uncomfortable, as to lead them to seek some other connections, where their minds will not be disturbed, where conscience may go to sleep, as they listen to the smooth things from the lips of their new prophet, where

they may rail against ardent zeal, unrebuked, and hug their delusions. Thus they may draw off from the people of God, weary themselves a few more days in committing iniquity, and then "make their bed in hell."

Oh! for such a baptism on all the churches, that it may soon be said, "the sinners in Zion are afraid, fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites!"—such a baptism, that every hypocrite shall be constrained to cry, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire, who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" But,

3. A most desirable consequence of this baptism from on high is, that *great numbers will be born again.* Such was the happy result of the baptism foretold in the text. "And the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. And the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. And they went every where preaching the word. So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." This continued, for the most part, for the space of the apostolic age, and for a short period subsequent. For a long time, however, during the succeeding ages of corruption, these seasons of grace were very rarely witnessed. A few Christians, a few churches, in obscure places, were occasionally refreshed. At length the heavens were again opened, and Germany, in the days of Luther, received the copious showers. Thousands and tens of thousands were born again. The revival spread, and Europe was filled with the new song.

It is related of the Rev. John Livingston, ancestor of the Livingston family in this country, that, when he was about 27 years of age, June 21st, 1630, at a communion season in the kirk of Shotts, in Scotland, when a multitude of persons were assembled from far and near, he "was with very much ado prevailed on to think of giving the sermon." On this occasion, he found more of the presence of God than at any other time of his life. Having preached "for about an hour and a half from Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26, he was led on about an hour's time in a strain of exhortation and warning, with great enlargement and melting of heart." "I can speak on sure ground,"

said the Rev. Mr. Fleming of Cambuslang, about twelve miles from Shotts, "that near five hundred had at that time a discernible change wrought in them, of whom most proved lively Christians afterwards. It was the sowing of a seed in Clydesdale, so that many of the most eminent Christians in that country could date either their conversion, or some remarkable confirmation of their case, from that day." It was a *Baptism of the Holy Ghost.*

About the year 1732, something of the same kind occurred in Germany, at Saltzburg, among the Roman Catholics. God was pleased to pour out his Spirit on the people in so remarkable a manner, that above twenty thousand of them, merely by reading the Bible, were determined to throw off popery and embrace the reformed religion; and became so very zealous for the gospel, as to be willing to suffer the loss of all things in the world, and actually to forsake their houses, lands, goods, and relations, to enjoy the pure preaching of the gospel;—with great earnestness, and tears in their eyes, beseeching protestant ministers to preach to them wherever they came, when banished from their own country.—(*See Edward's Call to United Prayer.*)

Nearly at the same time, and for many years afterwards, the Holy Spirit descended, in a remarkable manner, upon New England, and other British provinces in America, and also many parts of England, Wales, and Scotland, when multitudes were born again. This work was, to a very great extent, connected with the labors of WHITEFIELD, who began to preach in 1736, and rested from his labors in 1770. From the first, he sought, and seems to have obtained, this Baptism of the Holy Ghost. Though he preached about eighteen thousand times, the number of souls that were led under his preaching to seek the Lord was far greater. Scores often, and not seldom hundreds, were hopefully converted under a single sermon. As the result of one day's preaching in Moorfields, London, he received about one thousand notes from persons under conviction. And soon afterwards, upwards of three hundred were received into the society in one day. At Cambuslang, about four miles from Glasgow, in Scotland, "persons from all parts flocked to hear, and many went home convinced and converted to God. People sat unwearied till two in the morning, to hear sermons, disregarding the weather."

"Thousands and thousands were melted down under the word and power of God." I forbear to speak of more recent days. Most of you are familiar with the fact, that, since the commencement of the present century, it has been not an unfrequent occurrence, for widely-extended communities in this country, thus to be refreshed with the baptism of the Holy Ghost.

We may, therefore, very reasonably expect, that, if the people of God in this city with one heart seek and obtain a baptism of the Holy Ghost, not a few hundreds only, but thousands and tens of thousands will be born again Nothing else will save these crowds, that are pressing on to destruction. We must be baptized with the Spirit, or they will surely perish. Oh! for a speedy and mighty outpouring!

IV. WHAT, THEN, WILL SECURE IT?

1. *Extraordinary prayer.*—God says, in reference to the rising glory of the church, "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them." Hear how he calls upon his people thus to seek and secure this blessing. "Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Look, too, at his promise;—"When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them. I will open rivers in the high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys." Compare this promise with that given to the believer, in reference to the Holy Spirit, under the image of "rivers of living waters." In respect to what, was the promise given, "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full?" And to what did the Saviour refer, when he said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find?" You have the answer in close connexion;—"If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the *Holy Spirit* to them that ask him?" Yes, this, the greatest, richest blessing that even God can bestow, he has pledged himself to give to them that ask him.

Look now at the conduct of the apostles, and you find them acting in accordance with this belief. They had received the immuta-

ble promise, "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence." The Saviour, moreover, had told them, "Wait for the promise of the Father, which ye have heard of me." But how did they wait? Was it enough for them that the Saviour had told them that the day was at hand? No doubt they believed his word, and this was proof enough for them that the baptism would come. But they seemed to have understood that there was a close connexion between extraordinary prayer, and the fulfilment of the promise. "Then returned they unto Jerusalem, and all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren." And at the very time when "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, they were all with one accord in one place." *Livingston* spent a large portion of the night before preaching the sermon at Shotts, with some Christians, in prayer and conference. *Whitefield* spent two hours in special prayer the night before he was ordained. In the early part of his ministry, he had great comfort in meeting every evening with a band of Christians to spend an hour in prayer for the success of the gospel, and for all their acquaintance, so far as they knew their circumstances. In this he had uncommon satisfaction. Sometimes whole nights were spent in prayer. "Often," he says, "have I seen them overwhelmed with the Divine presence, and crying out, Will God, indeed, dwell with men upon earth?" Sometimes at midnight, after he had been wearied with the labors of the day, he found his strength renewed in this exercise. Such were the sources whence this wonderful man drew his amazing power.

To secure, then, this gift—the Baptism of the Holy Ghost—we must *pray*, and *plead*, and *wrestle*. We must pray, not intermittently, but "without ceasing." The prayer that we offer must be prayer indeed—the breathing of the soul—the full beating of the heart. It must be uncommon, persevering, believing, ardent, importunate. In a word, it must be *the effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous.*

2. But more. *We must make an extraordinary, unreserved consecration of our souls to Christ.* It can scarcely be questioned, that this was done by the apostles repeatedly, during those ten days in which they were waiting "for the promise of the Father." *Whitefield*, at the moment of his ordination, thus gave himself away to

his Redeemer. "I offered up," he says, "my whole spirit, soul, and body, to the service of God's sanctuary." Thirty-five years afterwards, he made the declaration, "I call God to witness, (and I must be a cursed devil and hypocrite, to stand here in the pulpit, and provoke God to strike me dead for lying,) that I never had the love of the world, and never felt it, one quarter of an hour in my heart, since I was twenty years old." And, truly, his life was a most abundant confirmation of this statement.

Of *Mrs. Edwards* it is related that, previous to those seasons already spoken of, in which her soul overflowed with joy, she was led again and again to make a new and most solemn dedication of herself to the service and glory of God, an entire renunciation of the world, and a resignation of all to God. This was done repeatedly for several years, and at each time followed for a long period by "a degree of spiritual light and enjoyment, which seemed to be, in reality, an anticipation of the joys of the heavenly world."

Such, too, was the consecration made of himself, by *James Brainard Taylor*, on the memorable day in which he was baptized with the Holy Ghost—a day to which he ever after looked back as the most important era in his Christian life. "I had," he says, "an increasing desire that the Lord would visit me, and fill my soul with the Holy Ghost—my cry to him was, '*seal* my soul for ever thine.' My earnest desire then was, as it had been ever since I professed religion six years before, that all love of the world might be destroyed —all selfishness extirpated—pride banished—unbelief removed—all idols dethroned—every thing hostile to holiness, and opposed to the divine will, crucified; that holiness to the Lord might be engraven on my heart, and evermore characterize my conversation. At this very juncture, I was delightfully conscious of giving up ALL to God. I was enabled in my heart to say, 'Here, Lord, take me, take my whole soul, and seal me thine—thine now, and thine for ever.' There then ensued such emotions as I never before experienced—all was calm, tranquil, silent, solemn—and a heaven of love pervaded my whole soul. I had a witness of God's love to me, and of mine to him. I was dissolved in tears of love and gratitude to our blessed Lord. He came as King, and took full possession of my heart. Since that blessed season, I have enjoyed times of refresh-

ment, in which I have obtained *nearer* access to God. O, the peace which I have had, and joy in the Holy Ghost! It has flowed as a river. I have been happy in my Lord: I have exulted in the God of my salvation."

Such is the testimony of those who, being dead, yet speak. Who will go and do likewise? Here—now—at this table of the Lord? Yes, give to him your all for time and eternity. It is only thus that you can know what is meant by the *riches of full assurance.* Let not the worldly professor think that he can grasp the world and fill his heart with it, and at the same time have these ravishing joys. Oh, no! it is a vain hope. Let go your hold of the world; tread it under your feet; empty your heart, and bid the Holy Spirit welcome. And do it for eternity. Do you wish such a baptism? Wish it! How can you not? Can it be possible that there is here one blood-washed soul, that does not wish to experience this "joy unspeakable and full of glory?" What! a Christian, and yet content to live so far from Christ? A Christian, and yet no ardent desire to have the Spirit come thus to dwell without a rival in your heart? It cannot be! You are deceiving yourself. "*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*"

Is it then desirable that Christians should have such large measures of love and joy—that hypocrites should be alarmed, and aroused from their delusions—and that thousands of perishing souls should be born again? Then, how immensely important that you and I, that every Christian should enjoy a baptism from above! Without it, it is in vain for us to attempt to bring dying sinners to Christ. Oh seek an extraordinary baptism. Look for a mighty outpouring. The Spirit is now descending. We feel that he is near. Others feel it;—

"A rill, a stream, a torrent flows,
But pour a mighty flood!
Oh! sweep the nations—shake the earth,
Till all proclaim thee God."

V. WHEN MAY WE LOOK FOR THIS WONDROUS BLESSING? Not of course until we are waiting for it by prayer and entire consecration to the service of God. "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost *not many days hence.* "It is not for you to know the times

or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." God knows best when to manifest himself in great power—when his glorious visit will be most suitable and most appreciated.

"*Not many days hence.*" The promised blessing will come. "Though it tarry, wait for it. For yet a *little* while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you. For the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in; behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."

But will he come to *you*? to this church? Are you waiting, looking, praying? Have you made the full and joyful consecration? Can you now say, "My Redeemer is mine, and I am his?" Oh! "the boundless bliss!" "Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost, *not many days hence.*"

Let this spirit of extraordinary prayer, and entire consecration, pervade the hearts of Christians extensively, and soon, very soon, will copious showers of Divine influence descend on *all* the churches, allaying, at once, all unhallowed passions and prejudices, introducing every where the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and quickening into life and vigor a thousand sacred charities, to bless the world and bring honor to the Redeemer. Come, then, thou blessed Spirit, come quickly. *Amen.*

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THE CRIMINALITY, COWARDICE, AND CURE OF DUELING.

Numbers xxxv. 16, 17, 18.—*If a man smite another with an instrument of iron, so that he die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. And if he smite him with throwing a stone, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death. Or if he smite him with an hand-weapon of wood, wherewith he may die, and he die, he is a murderer; the murderer shall surely be put to death.*

Scarce any feature of the Bible is more remarkably divine than its peculiar estimate of the worth and sacredness of man. This book was written in ages when men were, to a great extent, regarded by their kind as fellow foragers with beasts of burden or fellow foes with beasts of prey. The mighty mass of men, with the exception of here and there a Nimrod, a Pharaoh, and a Xerxes, were exceedingly degraded, their lives not otherwise valued than as they might avail to waste and destroy in war, or in times of peace hew wood and draw water, and build tombs and pyramids for their masters. A grand object of

revelation was to re-seal man with the image of his Maker; to recal him to a just sense of his dignity and worth as the child and heir of eternity; to apprise him of his stewardship; to imbue him with a subdued reverence of that breath of God, that inspiration of the Almighty, which awakens within him the sacred mystery of life, with its conscious individuality, and its onward and endless destiny, and its felt relationship and responsibility to his brother man and his Maker God. Taught by the Bible, man feels that his life is a hallowed thing, an inviolable mystery, the gift of God, his capital upon the improvement of which depends bliss or bankruptcy forever.

And this gift of life, with what an eye does God in heaven look down upon it!—How his thunders mutter vengeance when the lawless and unanointed meddle with it!—How high he has built those walls around it, and planted cherubim there, each with his flaming sword; and when those walls are scaled, and man dies by man, what a wo-tortured wretch is the murderer—what a scathed desolation is his bosom—what a laboring, frenzied giant his conscience: it seems as if every fiend in the pit came by turns and by groups to hoot and chatter about his foul deed, and foredate his doom, and blacken the darkness of his despair.

The present is deemed a suitable time to call upon Christian people to consider the barbarous and bloody custom of dueling, and their duty in relation to it. The law relative to Murder is a divine law; it is a part of that revelation which the ministry is appointed to enforce; and when a practice contravening that law obtains in society, the Christian minister does not step out of his sphere when he remonstrates against it. This it is my present

purpose to do, by showing that the duel is murder, by the law of God and of man; and that it is murder invested with all those circumstances which can render it cold-blooded and atrocious.

1. The law of God in relation to this custom is too clear to require comment. God has said, thou shalt not kill; and the fearful sanction of this law is aimed against the duelist, not only when he succeeds in killing his antagonist, but in view of the principles which lead him to the field. There is murder in the heart, though the conflict may be bloodless. Every duel *begins* in murder. It originates in a state of heart, which the Saviour declares exposes to the judgment denounced against murder.

2. The fighting of a duel is murder, by the settled principles of human law. "Murder" (says Blackstone) "is committed when a person of sound memory and discretion killeth any reasonable creature in being, with malice aforethought, either express or implied. Express malice is, when one with a sedate, deliberate mind, and formed design, doth kill another. *This takes in the case of deliberate dueling*, where both parties meet with an intent to murder." "A party killing another in a deliberate duel," (says Russell on Crimes,) "is guilty of murder; for whenever two persons in cold blood meet and fight on a precedent quarrel, and one of them is killed, the other is guilty of murder, and cannot help himself by alleging that he was first struck by the deceased; or that he had often declined to meet him, and was prevailed upon to do it by his importunity; or that it was his intent only to vindicate his reputation; or that he meant not to kill, but only to disarm his adversary. He has deliberately engaged in an act highly unlawful, in defiance of the laws, and he

must at his peril abide the consequences." "In all possible cases," (says Foster,) "deliberate homicide, upon a principle of revenge, is murder. No man under the protection of law is to be the avenger of his own wrongs." Such are the principles of English law, and they are responded to by the common sense of civilized man. And whatever may be the plea of the duelist who has killed his antagonist, and however he may elude the arm of justice, he has committed an act which can be described only by those terms which are employed by every civilized nation under heaven to define the crime of murder.

3. Dueling is murder rendered more atrocious by the deliberation with which it is perpetrated. In a large proportion of instances the crime of malicious homicide is committed in the heat and hurry of exasperated passion, under circumstances that partially suspend reason and prevent reflection. Often too the offenders are ignorant and half savage men, whose passions have never been restrained and tamed amid the bland influences of refined society. Not so with the duelist. His whole affair, from beginning to end, is a measured, deliberate business. They are professed *gentlemen*, who engage in these affairs of honor. There must be no bluster, no outbreaking of rude and vulgar passion. They must be calm as a summer morning—cool and collected as in the ordinary intercourse of society—from the first note to the last shot, there must be a studied suppression of all unseemly and unusual excitement. Both the challenging and challenged party have ample time to reflect upon the character and probable consequences of their intended meeting. They have hours, and if they please, days, to think of what they are about to do. Besides, the men who sustain the so-called code of honor, are not ignorant ruffians; they know their

duty to society—they lay claim to civility and good breeding. What then must be the degree, the depth, the impulsive power of that malice, which urges these men to mortal combat? There is some palliation for the fanatic, who deeming his country wronged, plants his infernal machine in the path of the oppressor. There is the semblance of a plea for the highwayman, or the pirate, who kills for his bread. It is not all malice that directs the stiletto of the hired assassin. But it is malice, bitter as wormwood, and cold as the last chill of death, that freezes into firmness the purpose and the nerve of the duelist.

4. The duelist contracts the double guilt of murder and suicide. By the same act he wantonly puts in jeopardy his own life and his neighbor's. He takes all the appropriate steps to effect his own destruction, by placing himself before the deadly weapon of his enemy, and inviting him to kill him if he can: and on his part he employs his weapon and his skill to compass the death of his adversary; and whatever may be the issue of the conflict, in the eye of justice and of God, each of the combatants is at once a murderer and a suicide.

5. The duelist is frequently a murderer under pretexts eminently hypocritical. The alleged reason for calling a man into the field is, in many, if not most cases, not the real reason. Who does not know this? How often has the duelist been known to wait and watch, for months and years, to find a pretext for a quarrel, that under cover of the so-called code of honor, he might glut his vengeance, or despatch for ever a successful rival. His envy, his cherished grudge, leads him to put himself in the way of insult, and he longs to be insulted, that he may have an opportunity of murdering the man he hates, without losing

entirely his standing as an honorable man in society. A large proportion of the duels which have disturbed the public peace in this country, have, in fact, been the deadly settlement of old and cherished feuds, under the merest pretences imaginable. The actors, though professedly vindicating impeached honor, were in reality gratifying a long settled purpose of revenge and death.

Frequently the murderous hypocrite will use unwearied endeavors to provoke the man he hates, to challenge him, that he may have the advantage of choice of weapons, distance, &c., and that he may seem to the public the hated and the better man, compelled in self-defence to take up the weapons of death. Political considerations often prompt the duelist. It has been affirmed that several times in the history of our country, duels have been got up for the express purpose of taking off leading and influential party men. Such is the abominable hypocrisy of no small portion of the men who claim to be paragons of honor and magnanimity: mere dastards, who clothe their murders with the pomp and circumstance of the duel, only that they may save themselves from the elevation of the gallows and the attentions of the hangman.

The hypocrisy of duelists is scarcely less striking in another aspect.—The code by which they are governed is the code of honor.—It is a system that contemplates those nice and delicate questions which arise among *very* high-minded and *very* honorable men. The laws of the land may do for the vulgar and gross people, but not for honorable men. They are not discriminating and nice enough to weigh and determine questions in which the exquisite sensibilities of these gentlemen are concerned. And yet this code by which they are regulated, and which teaches

them to demand "the pound of flesh," the heart's blood of their brother in atonement for a contemptuous look or word—this code, so exquisitely nice in its guardianship of their honor, permits these same gentlemen to go under her shield to the gambling table, the grog shop, and the brothel. They may be unfaithful to a wife, but not disrespectful to a gentleman. They may be profane, and oppressive to their dependents, nuisances in their families and neighborhoods; and yet all honorable, very honorable men; so much so that the prescribed penalty of a doubt, expressed in word or look, is death in cold blood. Admirable hypocrisy!

6. The real courage of duelists is very questionable. It is not courage, but *cowardice*, that prompts the giving and receiving of challenges. It is done because they are afraid of being regarded as cowards and without spirit, by their corrupt friends, and by that portion of the public who uphold dueling. It has been frequently and publicly said by duelists, that they abhor the custom—their own judgment condemns it, and they offer no other apology than the fear of a corrupt public sentiment. It is therefore palpable cowardice that sustains the custom. Duelists involve themselves in mortal combat simply because they have not nerve and courage to resist absurd opinion, and follow the decisions of their own reason and conscience. Cowardice more base and contemptible cannot be easily conceived of, than that which thus meanly succumbs to a vulgar and abhorred prejudice, against which the man's own reason remonstrates, and where all the dear interests of life are at stake. What a perfect coward must that man be who is afraid to do right, afraid to refrain from what he professes to abhor, lest he should alienate a few unreasonable men!

That the dueling system is a code for cowards, is manifest upon the very face of it. It is an agreement among those who adopt it, to behave respectfully and honorably in their intercourse, and this agreement is enforced by the mere fear of the pistol or the rifle. They thus proclaim to the world that they are destitute of those principles which secure decorous and gentlemanly conduct among other men, and that they can be kept decent and well-behaved only by being placed in peril of their lives. Their only dependence is upon each other's fears. Indeed their code derives all its efficacy from their cowardice.

7. The duelist commits murder without the remotest prospect of gaining the alleged end. The alleged end of the challenger in a duel is to obtain satisfaction for an insult, and to vindicate his impeached honor. A. alleges that B. is not a gentleman; and thereupon B. invites A. to meet him in mortal combat: and upon exchanging shots, A. is killed. What does that prove? It proves that B. at a certain distance may hit a mark the size of a man. But does it prove that B. is a gentleman? Does it prove that he is not a knave or liar? Have the public reason to feel assured that B. is an honorable man because he can hit a mark the size of a man? Would not hitting a tree, or any other inanimate object, prove his good character equally well, besides being a more innocent way of earning an honorable reputation?

But what satisfaction does B. get by killing his neighbor? He does not satisfy a revengeful feeling, for he disavows such feeling. Well, has A., who thought him no gentleman, had his ignorance enlightened and his judgment rectified by being shot down? Or is B. now any better satisfied of himself that he is a gentleman? Then

he must have had some doubts before, and should have had some charity for A.'s misgivings. Or is B.'s character reinstated with the public by the fact that A. is killed? And is the killing of a man the criterion by which we are to gauge character and worth? The system is as ridiculous as it is wicked. It is murder without any tendency to the end for which it is professed to be committed. Would the fighting of any number of duels have bleached the character of Benedict Arnold, or Aaron Burr, and made them honorable men?

The absurdity of the duelist is obvious in another view. By engaging in a duel, he virtually concedes that his character is questionable, and an appeal to arms is necessary to establish it. It would not be thought necessary for Franklin, or Madison, or Washington, or Marshall, were they living, to engage in a duel. Their characters were above reproach or suspicion. They were acknowledged as honorable men, without a certificate that they had shot down their traducers. But the duelist, by his own showing, is of so dubious a character, even among his personal friends and constituents, that he must fight to convince them he is a man and not a poltroon. The evidences of his courage and honor have been so few and doubtful, that he must go to the field of blood to sustain them.

8. The duelist is a murderer, not upon some unlooked for provocation, but by profession, by rule and system. His position on the list of blood is not accidental—it is chosen. Dueling is a part, and a boasted part of his scheme of life. He has studied his subject. He has acquired skill in the use of deadly weapons for the express purpose of being qualified to kill such of his fellow men as he may choose in the course of his life to call into the field.

The common murderer, whom we hand over without hesitation to the hangman, perhaps never dreamed of committing the dreadful deed till a few moments or hours before he inflicted the fatal blow. "But the duelist has made it a part of his general system, and a deliberate purpose, to destroy human life; and to a mind thus trained and prepared, no event of this kind can come wholly unlooked for, or be as in the other case a matter of mere and absolute surprise."

9. The principles of the duelist are without a parallel despotic, sanguinary and subversive of all government. He takes upon himself the adjudication of his own wrongs and the redress of his own grievances, and thus lends his influence to resolve society into a state of nature and savage ferocity. All laws of God and man must give way while this man adjusts his quarrels. He must have the whole field of social, civil and domestic relations subject to his fury. What though his enemy be a citizen, charged with duty to the state; or a representative entrusted with the interests of his constituents; or a friend, gladdening many a social circle; or a son, sustaining and blessing fond and white-haired parents; or a husband, cherishing a devoted, faithful wife; or a father, surrounded by affectionate, helpless children;—what though he be all these and more;—the claim of the duelist for his blood, on account of some unguarded or disrespectful word, is paramount to every other. God, and law, and nature, with all her tenderness, must be despised and trampled under foot, while this incarnation of ferocity gnashes his teeth, and gluts his maw, and quenches his fevered thirst with blood. Good heavens! are these the inspirations of honor? Is this *magnanimity*, that stalks over the land, scowling at law and virtue, and collecting tribute in tears and agonies of widow-

ed wives and children "smitten amid their playthings," and in broken hearts of parents bereaved in old age of their only hope?

Such is the practice of dueling:—a practice staining with blood-spots that "will not out" the history of this country, amid all the light and civilization of the nineteenth century—a practice which has already carried off its hundreds of victims, without punishment and almost without rebuke; selecting them, in some instances, from the pride and strength of the nation.

It is time to consider the question, whether this abominable and bloody relic of barbarous times shall be tolerated any longer. The land is defiled with blood unrighteously shed, and its cry has gone up to Heaven; and the men of violence who have shed it, not only escape, "unwhipt of justice," but are endured among honest men, and elevated to places of trust and honor. Will Christians hold their peace, and wink at the enormity? Will patriots entrust despisers of life with the guardianship of life? Or scoffers at law and government with the making of law? Shall public sentiment tamely acquiesce in a system of ruffianism that is a disgrace to the nation and the age, and an insult to the throne of Jehovah? We trust not. We trust and believe there is courage, and patriotism, and virtue enough among us, speedily to give this practice its true place in the catalogue of crime, and consign to merited infamy every man who shall hereafter be engaged in a duel.

This may be done,—

1. By the cultivation of a deep seated reverence of law.

The laws cannot execute themselves. They derive all their force and efficiency from public sentiment. They might just as well be written on the sea beach for the government of the waves, as spread out on our statute books, if not sustained and reverenced by the public mind. But is it not as true as it is humiliating, that an increasingly lax sentiment, of which lynching and mob violence are the exponents, pervades the land? And when passion and temporary excitement have wielded the scales and the sword, have we not winked at it, or made inefficient resistance? To lay our hand effectually upon dueling, the spirit of the community in relation to law must be reillumined and reinforced. Every man must learn to look upon the law as his best friend, and must regard all violence offered it, as he would the murder of a father.

2. The correct but scattered and slumbering sentiment of the nation must be concentrated and made to operate with force and energy sufficient to constrain the public authorities to do their duty in reference to duelists. It is notorious that the escape of the duelist who has killed his antagonist, is a matter of course, in many parts of the country. His crime may be committed at noon-day, in cold blood, and within limits where the law has provided for its punishment. There may have been twenty witnesses of the deed, and yet it will be marvellous if he is even indicted; or if indicted, it is almost certain no jury will convict him. Why is this? Does the public mind in any state in the Union sanction cold blooded murder? Or is it only dormant and inefficient? We believe there is nothing worse than criminal apathy on the subject. Almost every reflecting mind disapproves the practice. There is no need of creating a public sentiment against dueling. God has written it on men's hearts. They recoil instinct-

ively at the wanton shedding of human blood. All that is necessary is to combine and quicken the opinion of the country, and juries and judges will do their duty. If one tenth of the effort had been made to rouse the country on this subject that has been made in reference to the evil of intemperance, there would now be no hesitancy in arresting the duelist and convicting him of murder; and no man would dare fight a duel who had any regard for his public character.

It is time then to awake on this subject. All classes among us have incalculable interests at stake in the unwarped administration of law and justice. But the land is defiled with blood; while justice is fallen away backwards. And until Christians and patriots lift up their remonstrances, and bring all their influence to bear against this enormity, every drop of blood spilled in single combat will lie at our door, and will be recompensed when our cup is full.

The press has a high duty to perform in relation to this practice. Its influence is mighty, and must be felt. Let it plead for an insulted nation against this abomination.—Let it call dueling by its right name of murder. Let it pour forth its rebukes without respect to party, against the monster who dares to trifle with life and with his brother's blood. And let those rebukes roll like thunder peals over the land till the nation shall awake and redeem itself, and the murderer in high life shall be consigned with the murderer in low life, into the hands of justice, that they may be hanged by the neck till they are dead, and thus expiate by a common ignominy their defiance of the majesty of law and the sacredness of life.

Political men, patriots of every school, are solemnly called upon to annihilate this custom, because it is subversive of our civil institutions and of all free governments. "A free government is a government of laws made by the people for the protection of life, reputation, and property. A despotism is where life and its blessings are subject to the caprice of an individual. Those maxims and practices, therefore, which remove life, reputation, and property, from under the protection of law, and subject them to the caprice of an individual, are the essence of despotism," and ought to be resisted. Such a despotism duelists have set up in the face of high heaven, and through the length and breadth of a land claiming as its peculiar glory a government of laws. The acts of Great Britain that drove the colonies to revolution bore no comparison to the enormity and arrogance of the despotism established and maintained by duelists. Look at their daring contempt of the foundation principles of free government; their unblushing defiance of law and nature; their corrupting and blighting warfare upon the public virtue; and their havoc of private happiness: array before your mind the gory forms of those who have ingloriously fallen without law, or trial, or jury; and then say if such a despotic code is to be tolerated in this age of light and land of freedom. Shame, honor, humanity, religion, forbid it! Let this heaven-daring despotism receive a stern rebuke from every patriot and honest man. Henceforth let the man who will not forswear and condemn this abominable code, know that he is a doomed man, exiled from society, disowned by his party, despised by his country, and abandoned to the terrors of justice and an offended God; and let him feel, with the first murderer, that he is "a vagabond on the earth."

The pulpit also is bound to speak out on this subject.—This is no political matter. Corrupt partizans may indeed take advantage of any excitement on the subject, and attempt to turn it to party purposes:—but for that they must answer. The pulpit has its duty to perform, and is not responsible for the abuses of the ambitious and the unprincipled. Dueling is a crime of such magnitude, and so directly rebellion against God, that every minister must lift up his remonstrance against it, and forewarn the people that if this sin is not removed, God will have a dreadful reckoning with them. It is from the sanctuary, after all, that the blessed influence must proceed which shall effectually remove this and every other sin which is now filling up our cup of national iniquity. The gospel must go forth and imbue the people with love to God and man, and pervade the nation with sentiments of kindness and forbearance, and good will; and then wasting and violence will cease from among us.

Lastly, let every parent, every wife and sister, unite in the reprobation of the custom we have been considering. No where does this evil fall heavier or with more desolating power, than upon the domestic circle. When the duelist lifts the weapon of death, he aims not merely at his antagonist on the field, but through him strikes the infirm parent, the affectionate sister, the fond wife, the innocent children. And do not suppose that you and your families are beyond the reach of this scourge. True, the code of honor so-called, may not be recognized in your vicinity, or enforced by the example of immediate friends. But do not dream that you are out of danger. That brother, that son, will soon form new connections, and come under new influences. He may learn amid those influ-

ences to think that dueling is not only lawful, but in certain circumstances necessary. He may unexpectedly find himself in those very circumstances; and his counsellors may appeal to his wavering mind, and tell him there is no honorable escape from mortal combat. He thinks hurriedly of his home, his mother, his wife, and his little ones—and he thinks of his honor * * * * * *. Do you see that group of men, stealthily winding into that beautiful valley, that looks as if nature had just retired to it to present unseen an offering of flowers and music to the Father of man and of mercies? And do you observe that other group? And now they are all in the vale.—What will they do? They are brethren. Have they come to bless each other and to worship? But what mean those fierce looks, that measured distance, those compressed lips, that scowl of defiance, those extended weapons!—Ah! the deed is done, and the life blood gushes from a heart rent by a brother man. And that ghastly form was a son, a husband, and a father. Whose bosom shall hereafter be wrung with such heavy tidings? Parent, sister, wife, children, join with me in prayer that it be not yours.

Christians! patriots! citizens!—say with one voice—what God and nature have said—*No murderer shall go unpunished.* We owe it to ourselves, we owe it to the general cause of freedom, to hold up the example of one great nation, in which life, liberty and peace are secured by the omnipotence of law and a pervading sense of responsibility to the Infinite Judge. Let then the wise and patriotic do their duty, in spreading light, uniting public sentiment, and executing justice—let the lawless of every name be made to "feel how awful goodness is"—and one and another of our national sins will soon be blotted out, and our land become pre-eminently "a dwelling-place of righteousness—the joy of the whole earth."

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THE ABOUNDING GRACE OF THE GOSPEL.

Luke xiv. 22.—*And yet there is room.*

It will instantly occur to you that these words are connected with the parable of the great supper. A certain man who had made a feast, sent his servant, at the proper time, to invite the guests. But instead of accepting the invitation, they had both the incivility and the ingratitude to send back excuses which the master of the feast saw at once were occasioned by gross insincerity. He was angry at their conduct, and not without good reason; and straightway sent out his servant again, and directed him to bring in the poor and the maimed, the halt and the blind. The servant having complied with his lord's command, returns to report his obedience, and at the same time makes the declaration: "And yet there is room."—The children of want and wretchedness to whom thou didst send me, I have collected agreeably to thine orders; but there are seats yet unoccupied, there are accommodations for a still greater number of guests.

The explanation of this parable is easy. The great supper represents that provision which is made in the gospel to supply the spiritual wants of men. The man who made the supper represents the Lord Jesus Christ. The invitation to the supper by the servant, represents the offer of salvation to the Jews by the Apostles. The rejection of the invitation denotes the rejection of the gospel offer, especially by the Pharisees, and higher classes of the Jews. The poor, the halt, and the blind, to whom the second invitation is addressed, may represent publicans, and others who were despised for the meanness of their occupation or character. All this, however, has a more general meaning, and may very properly be considered as illustrating the free grace of the gospel, and the treatment which the gospel receives in every age. "And yet there is room." It is an encoura-

ging declaration to every anxious and heavy laden sinner. It is with reference to persons of this description especially, that I purpose to consider it. May the Spirit of God open the heart of every such person before me, and cause the message now to be delivered to be as life from the dead.

"And yet there is room." Room IN WHAT?

1st. Room in *the love of God.* There are two senses in which God may be said to love his creatures: he may exercise toward them feelings of benevolence, or he may regard them with a spirit of complacency. In the latter sense he loves only those who are conformed to his image: perfectly holy beings he regards with unmixed complacency: those who are partially sanctified only with a corresponding degree of complacency. But the love of benevolence, or a spirit of good will and compassion, he extends towards all his creatures; and in the exercise of this spirit, he will render all as happy, as is consistent with the grand designs of his government, and the best interests of the universe. It was in this divine perfection—this fountain of love in the very heart of Jehovah,—that the plan of our redemption took its origin; and here is the pledge, that every one of you who desire it enough to comply with the specified conditions, may be saved. What love was that, sinner, which contemplated your case as a wretched and ruined wanderer, and determined on the necessary provision to save you, millions of ages before you had a being! What love, that could resolve on such an expensive measure for your salvation, as the death of the Son of God; and which could induce the Almighty Father, in due time, to give up his Son to the actual sufferings and horrors of crucifixion! What love manifested towards you, in permitting you to be born where you have been; in bringing within your reach so many means for obtaining salvation; and in spreading before you so many motives to induce you to obtain it? If God has manifested so much love towards the whole race of men, and so much towards you in particular, be assured that his love is expansive enough to receive you on your return to him. Oh, how conclusive, and yet how unutterably tender is that argument of the Apostle—"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Yes, sinner, there is room enough for you in the love of God. That love is an ocean shoreless, bottomless. In every part of the universe, even in the prison of despair, there are those who feel, and who will sooner or later be compelled to testify, that God is Love.

2d. There is room in *the Saviour's bleeding heart.* Suppose you were lying in a state of wretched captivity in some distant land; and some benefactor hearing of your condition, should cross the ocean, and travel over mountains, and submit to the most painful sacrifices

with a view to your relief; and suppose, after he should reach you, he should find that there was some fearful peculiarity in your condition, which rendered it impossible that any ransom should be accepted for you short of his own blood; and suppose you should see him bow his head to the block, or else expire amid the more lingering agonies of crucifixion, and should know and feel that it was all done to deliver you from the wretched thraldom to which you were subject: could you find it in your heart to doubt whether that man regarded you with deep and strong affection? and would you not conclude, and most reasonably too, that if he would give his life for you, there was nothing that he would not give? Now, Jesus has given his life for you, sinner; and to what other conclusion can you come in respect to *him*? Every step that he took in this miserable world, involved him in some scene of suffering. Look at him in the manger, and behold his humble condition there. Look at him while he was driven about from city to city, not having where to lay his head. Look at him in the garden, and see under what a mighty burden he there labors, and agonizes, and well nigh sinks. Look at him at the judgment hall of Pilate. Look at him bearing his cross up to the fatal spot. Look at him nailed to the tree; in the agony of death; and listen to that groan with which all nature sympathised, and which announced that the death scene was over. And now, since he has done all this for you, and since he has risen from the dead, and has ascended into the heavens, for the purpose of carrying forward his mediatorial work, is it not ungrateful, and unreasonable, and criminal, to doubt that he is willing to receive you? If there had not been room for you in his compassionate heart, can you suppose for a moment that he would ever have submitted to the agony of the garden, or to the ignominy of the cross? Behold in what he has already done, a pledge that his arms are open for your reception; and hear him saying to you in every dying groan—"And yet there is room."

3d. There is room in *the grace of the Holy Spirit.* I cannot tell how often, or in how many ways, the Spirit has already striven with you to bring you to repentance; but I doubt not that you have all, at some time or other, felt his influences; and perhaps some of you have mistaken his monitions, for some fanatical impulse, and have got rid of them as soon as possible; and possibly there may be others, who, with a full conviction that the Spirit of God was operating upon them, have presumptuously said to him, "Go thy way for this time." But, however this may be, certain it is that the Holy Spirit is ready to strive with all who will welcome his gracious influences. When you think of the greatness of the work which devolves upon you; of the blindness of your mind and the hardness of your heart; when you think how great must be the change in old things passing away and all things becoming new, perhaps

you are ready to yield to discouragement, and to say this is too great a work for *you* to perform. What then? You are not expected to perform it without divine aid. God offers you his Spirit to second all your exertions; and that Spirit is an omnipotent agent; and he works in you most powerfully at the precise time when you work the most powerfully yourself. God permits you even to command his aid; and if you try it, be assured you will, like all others who have made the same experiment, find it effectual to your salvation. I repeat, there is room enough for you in the gracious aids of the Holy Spirit: this divine agent stands ready to convert, to sanctify, to fit you for heaven.

4th. There is room in *the offers and promises of the gospel.* All these offers and promises are founded in the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. Had no atonement been made, it is not easy to see how there could ever have been a proclamation of pardon in this ruined world. For aught that appears, age after age might have rolled away, and no tower of mercy or hope would ever have risen up to greet the bewildered eye, or to cheer the desolate heart. But in virtue of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, it has been proclaimed on this earth that there is forgiveness with God; and he has sent forth his ambassadors to apprise men that he is willing to have mercy upon them; and they are made welcome to all the blessings of his grace. Hear the gracious invitation. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, let him come; yea let him come, and buy wine and milk without money and without price." And again, "Whosoever cometh unto me shall in no wise be cast off." And again, "Whosoever will, let him come and take the waters of life freely." What offers can you conceive more large, and free, and gracious, than these? Are they not infinite, like the God from whom they come; like the atoning sacrifice on which they are built?

5th. There is room *in the church.* Just in proportion as the people of God are alive to the obligations of religion, and to the honor of their Master, they desire to see the borders of Zion enlarged; and they have a heart to mourn over her desolations. When they look around, and see the multitudes who are thronging the road to death, their eye affecteth their heart; they mourn that so many youth, that so many men of activity and influence, that so many of every class, and of every age, are living for this world only, and are exclusively occupying themselves with the things which are seen and temporal. They long to see the number of the professed and real disciples of Christ, greatly increased; and they stand ready to welcome into the sacred enclosure of the church as many as will come with a right spirit, and their language is like that of Moses to Hobab, "Come thou with us and we will do thee good, for the Lord hath

spoken good concerning Israel." And when those around actually begin to turn to the Lord, and publicly to dedicate themselves to him in an everlasting covenant, it is a source of the richest joy to the church to welcome them to her communion. When the parent sees his child, in respect to whom he had well nigh given up the hope of his being converted, coming with apparent humility and faith to sit down with him at the sacramental table; when one, and another, and another, sees friends with whom he is connected in some of the tenderest of human relations, joining with him for the first time in the most impressive and delightful act of christian communion; when the humble disciple who had long been mourning over the languishing interests of Zion, sees in the increased number of communicants the evidence that those interests are reviving; there is in all this a joy that the world knoweth not of. Those who come to join them, find not only room, but a cordial welcome; and they are greeted as fellow helpers unto the kingdom of God.

6th. I observe, once more, that there is room *in heaven.* "In my Father's house," said Jesus to his disciples, "are many mansions: I go to prepare a place for you." There are indeed many mansions, and some of them, no doubt, are distinguished by a higher degree of honor and felicity than others; but they are all mansions of glory: each of them is a part of that "building of God, that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." There, there is to be heard the music of the redeemed: there is to be seen the unveiled glory of Jehovah: there are the streets of gold, and the river of life, and the throne of God and the Lamb: there is every thing in short to delight the eye, to ravish the ear, to regale the taste, to kindle everlasting ecstasy in the soul. But there, amidst all that beauty and glory, "there is room." There, amidst the best society in the universe, where the great King keeps his palace, and where the angels strike their golden harps—"there is room." There, where unmingled bliss will reign in its perfection through everlasting ages, where there will be no sin, nor sorrow, nor sighing, nor death, where friends will never know a separation, and where joy will beam in every eye, especially as it fastens upon the exalted Lamb of God—"there is room." All the inhabitants of heaven proclaim that there is room. Redeemed spirits proclaim it. Angels proclaim it. He who is the light and glory of the upper world proclaims it. There is a voice from above which seems to echo through the whole creation—a voice of love—a voice of tenderness—a voice of invitation, proclaiming, "yet there is room."

Our next inquiry is, "FOR WHOM there is room?"

I answer, in a word, for all who will come. Else what means the unlimited invitation; "Come unto me, *all ye* that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Ho, *every one* that thirst-

eth, come ye to the waters." "The Spirit and the Bride say, come; and let him that heareth say, come; and let him that is athirst, come; and *whosoever will*, let him come and take the waters of life freely."

Go, then, where you will, and if you find yourself among human beings, you need not fear to tell them of Jesus and his salvation, as something in which they are personally and most deeply interested. Stand on which ever side of the globe you will,—set yourself down in some distant region where not a beam from the Sun of righteousness has ever penetrated; and whether you find yourself by the side of the Indian of the wilderness, or of the worshipper of Jugernaut, or of the cruel disciple of Mohamed, or of the forlorn and outcast Jew, you may unhesitatingly offer to him the pardon which the gospel offers to all. To every human being who will accept the salvation of Christ, no matter in what country he may have been born, or to what habit he may have been educated, the Bible authorizes us to say, "there is room."

"But what," says the anxious sinner, whose sins are set in order before him, and who sees his own heart as he never saw it before,—"is there room for me?" Yes, room for *you*. You do not, indeed, mistake in the impression you have of your own guilt: true it is, you are as guilty, and no doubt far more so, than you have ever imagined; but there is room for you notwithstanding. Your case might indeed be desperate, and no doubt would be so, if God's mercy had any limits except those which his justice and his faithfulness mark out; or if Christ's atonement were not broad enough to cover the deepest and most dreadful pollution; but as it is, you have no cause to be discouraged. With the Bible before me, I feel perfect confidence in announcing to you that there is salvation for *you;* and that you may come freely and receive of the blessings of God's grace. Hear what God himself says: "Come now and let us reason together; though your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

But says one, "there is something in my case that is peculiarly discouraging. I was born of pious parents, and was dedicated to God in my childhood, and have grown up under the influence of pious institutions, and have nevertheless contracted a habit of iron insensibility, and have either been indifferent to religion, or else have trifled with it all my life—is it possible that there can be room for me?" Yes, there is room for *you*. That insensibility of yours must indeed be removed: that heart must indeed break: but notwithstanding all your abuse of privileges, notwithstanding you have sinned against even your own baptism, and have become hardened by the very means which ought to have melted you, still upon your repentance you may be received. There is grace that can triumph over all your unworthiness. God himself waits for your return, and

would gladly welcome you as a prodigal come back from his wanderings. The angels and redeemed spirits would rejoice over your repentance. And if you have pious parents, or other dear friends, whether on earth or in heaven, no doubt they would hail you with gratitude and rapture as a joint heir with them to the heavenly inheritance.

But says another, "I have formed many resolutions to become religious, and have violated them all. Conscience has reproved me, and I have put it to sleep by thinking that there would be some more convenient season. Christian friends have besought me, and I have told them plainly enough by my conduct that I would not regard their kind admonitions. The Holy Spirit has striven with me, and I have even ventured to say to him, 'Depart at least for the present, till I can command more leisure, or till the world has lost some of its attractions, or till I have more resolution to enter on the great work'—and is it possible that there is room for me?" Yes, there is room for *you*. The course which you have adopted has indeed been marked by peculiar guilt; but still God will not cast you off for it, provided you will return now. Come with a broken and contrite heart, and his arms will be open to receive you. He will welcome you as a child, and adopt you just as freely into his family as if you had never been a wanderer; as if you had never grieved away his Spirit—never trifled with your own salvation.

But says another, "I have grown old in a course of impenitence. I have never perhaps yielded to gross sin; but then I have been proud, and self-righteous, and pharisaical: have thought little of the great sacrifice of Christ, and have practically turned away from it, and been trusting to a righteousness of my own. I am admonished now that my life is almost spent; and since it has been spent in such a manner, is it possible that there is yet room for me?" Ah, yes; even for *you*. Come and renounce that habit of self-righteousness; come realizing that you must perish unless you have some better plea than your own works as a ground of your acceptance; come with humility, with self-condemnation, with faith in the Saviour of sinners, and you will not knock at the door of mercy in vain. This habit of self-righteousness, if persevered in, will indeed destroy you; but if abandoned, you may be saved in spite of having indulged it. Come then with the spirit and prayer of the publican, and instead of pleading your own merit, of which you have none, plead only the mercy of God in Christ. It is enough for you to say, if you can say it from the heart—"God be merciful to me a sinner!" Though gray hairs are upon you, and mark you as a speedy victim for the grave; though you have all your life proudly turned away from the cross of Christ, and if you have sought salvation at all, have sought it where it is not to be found, still at the cross there is mercy for you: in the compassion of

God, in the Saviour's bleeding heart, in the grace of the Holy Spirit, there is room—room even for *you*.

I might go on to say that there is room for you in all the possible exigences of your condition. There is room for you to escape the lashes of a guilty conscience, the power of corrupt propensities, the forebodings of an awful hell. There is room for you in which you may be secure amidst the blasts of worldly calamity, for God will be your present hope in the time of trouble; amidst the agonies of your last hour, for you will rest then on the everlasting arm; after your earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, for your body will be under the watchful care of your Redeemer, and your spirit will be rejoicing among the ransomed in heaven; amidst the fires of the last day, the solemnities of the final judgment, for then especially your Saviour will vouchsafe to you his protection and his grace.

But instead of dwelling upon this train of reflection, let me in conclusion only refer you to the thought suggested by our Saviour in his saying '*Yet* there is room.' What is here the precise import of the word *yet*? It implies that notwithstanding the great multitude who have been saved, some in every age, and from every people as we have reason to suppose, there is as truly room for you as if you were to be the only inhabitants of the heavenly mansions. After so many ages have gone by, and so many millions have been gathered home to glory; after the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations have expired, and almost two thousand years of the christian dispensation have elapsed, during each of which periods heaven has gained a multitude of inhabitants, you are still bid as welcome to the blessings of God's grace, as if those blessings were now for the first time offered to the world.

I say unto you then, ye young and old, ye men of all ages, and all conditions, and all characters, there is yet room for you. There is nothing in the purposes of God, nothing in the dealings of God, nothing in the word of God, that ought for a moment to discourage you from setting out on the way to heaven: on the contrary there is every thing to rouse you to a course of resolute exertion. But while I proclaim to you on the authority of God that there is room now, I should be treacherous to your souls, if I were not also to declare that the day will ere long come when the door of mercy, in respect to you, will be shut. There may, indeed, still be room for others, whose period of trial may be continued after yours has expired; but *your* doom will be fixed in unalterable and everlasting wo. How near you may have approached to that period, none but the Omniscient God can tell; but you have reason to tremble, lest you may even now be passing some of your last hours as a probationer for eternity. Come then and secure the salvation of your soul. If you decide that you will not accept the invitation of the Saviour, and if the voice of mercy should become dumb while you

are dreaming of a future season for repentance, and if you should wake up amidst the woes of despair, how much more poignant will be the agonies of eternal death for the reflection that the blessings of eternal life were urged upon you; how much more intolerable to be confined in the dungeon of despair for the thought that there was room for you, if you would have consented to occupy it, in the palace of the King of glory?

SERMON CCXLIX.

BY WILLIAM B. SPRAGUE, D. D.

DESTRUCTIVE CONSEQUENCES OF SELF-FLATTERY.

PROVERBS xiv. 12.—*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*

ALL mankind desire to be saved; but comparatively few are willing to be saved in the way which God has appointed. There is some how or other a repugnance in the human heart against the terms of salvation; a repugnance which is never effectually overcome, but by the aid of the Spirit of God. In some, this opposition assumes a direct and palpable form; in others, it winds itself up so dexterously in some fair garb, that it accomplishes an entire self-deception.

It is to the desire that men have to be saved on the one hand, and to the aversion they have to the humbling terms of the gospel on the other, that we are to attribute the fact that true religion has so many counterfeits; that so many things are substituted for evangelical piety, which are either essentially opposed to it, or do not essentially belong to it. The invention of man has always been busy to find out some easier road to heaven than that which leads by the cross of Christ; and various expedients have been tried; and they have been a thousand times tested and shown to be vain, by affliction and death; nevertheless men have not become tired of them, and they are willing still to stake their immortal interests upon them, though God himself has forewarned them that the end thereof will be destruction. This is the plain import of our text—"There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

The text naturally divides itself:

I. *There is a way that seemeth right unto a man:*

II. *The end of that way is death.*

By the way here spoken of we may legitimately understand all those devices which men substitute in place of genuine religion as a ground of their self-flattery. Particularly,

1st. There are many who rest easy on account of *the orthodoxy of their creed.* They are great defenders of the faith. It is by no means certain that they have gone to the Bible for their religious views, but not improbably have taken them altogether on human authority. But let them have come by them as they may, their whole conversation shows, not only that they are zealous advocates for sound doctrine as they ought to be, but that their views of christian character do not reach much beyond it. When the alarm is given that there is a heretic in the field, they are instantly on the alert, buckling on their armor, and going forth as if to encounter the only enemy of God's kingdom. They lay out all their strength here, as if this were the sum and substance of the christian's conflict. Whether their zeal is put forth in defending long received opinions against those which are new, or in endeavoring to give currency to something which they regard as the essence of orthodoxy, but which comes in the shape of an innovation, all that they do passes with themselves, at least, as the effect of an extraordinary zeal to maintain God's truth.

Now that there are men, and blessed be God very many of them too, whose zeal for the truth is associated with zeal for every part of practical religion, admits not of doubt; but the persons to whom I refer, while they make every thing of orthodoxy, make little of any thing else. Only keep heresy off the ground, and they will not sigh if deep and earnest piety is kept off too. Speak to them of the love of Christ, of its depth, of its tenderness, of its constraining power, and there is no chord strung in their bosoms that vibrates to what you say. Speak to them of the importance of the revival of God's work, and the danger that threatens delaying sinners, and they will either say nothing, or will perhaps inquire whether the individuals to whom you refer have departed from the true faith. Endeavor to enlist them in the cause of christian benevolence, in doing something or giving something to promote the best interests of their fellow men, and not improbably you will find their ears as deaf as adders, and their hearts as hard as rocks. Nay, if you keep an eye upon them in their secular business, it would not be strange if you should discover that which would give you just cause to weep; and if you should feel that you had not a word to say, when you should hear it come tauntingly from the world, that a little less zeal for orthodoxy, and a little more regard to honesty, would make them better men.

After all, they are going on with a good degree of self-satisfaction. The way which they have chosen, on account of the blindness of their heart, seemeth right unto them.

2d. Men flatter themselves that they are safe *in consequence of partial reformations.* The degree of reformation that will satisfy a man's conscience, will be different in different cases. If he has been given to gross immorality, he may not improbably satisfy himself with becoming a moral man; and especially with abandoning the particular vice which was most prominent in his character. If his moral character has been generally correct, but he has been accustomed to neglect the public institutions of God's house, he may make himself easy by becoming an attendant on these institutions. If he has neglected to read the Bible, or to maintain family worship, or to come to the communion table, he may satisfy himself with taking up either or all of these neglected duties. If he has been accustomed to keep his hand clenched against the calls of charity, he may think that in opening his hand, and distributing according to his ability, he does that which will entitle him to the character of a christian. In these several cases, there are various degrees of reformation; but in no one of them is the reformation entire. There are some sins, (secret sins it may be,) harder to be abandoned than those that he has abandoned, which are yet retained; some duties, to which there is a still stronger aversion than to those which have been taken up, which are yet neglected. The great duty, without which all others in the sight of God are of no importance—that of yielding up the whole heart to the divine command, has not been seriously attempted. Nevertheless there has been some partial and external reformation; and this is the pillow on which the soul lays itself down and slumbers on the side of the abyss. The sinner compares his present condition with his past, and perceiving that there is a difference, too hastily concludes that that difference is radical, when it is only circumstantial. The principle of depravity still reigns in his heart. That tree of death still flourishes with deadly luxuriance. He has hewn off some of the branches, but the trunk and the root remain entire. Still this is a way that seemeth right unto him.

3d. There are others who make themselves easy *by substituting enthusiasm for genuine religion.*

It has been so common for infidels and opposers of religion to stigmatize true piety by the name of enthusiasm, that many people seem almost to have forgotten that such an evil really exists; and it is often at some hazard that a minister ventures to attack this device of Satan, lest he should be charged with pleading the cause of a dull and heartless religion. And if I do not greatly mistake, the adversary has taken advantage of the silence of ministers on this subject, and has fatally deceived many a person, making him think that he had

risen well nigh to the perfection of holiness, when the principle of sin was in full and vigorous operation. True religion is earnest, deeply earnest—but it is intelligent; it does not act without reason; and even when it kindles into the warmest fervors, it is sustained by God's living truth. But enthusiasm is ignorant; it is wild; it is censorious; and sometimes instead of supplicating God's mercy, it challenges his wrath. It sets up false standards; and all who do not come up to them, it casts off as reprobates. It talks abundantly of the glory of God, but it sometimes clearly means the glory of self. If you reprove its wild and fanatic movements, it will denounce your coldness: if you expostulate with it, it will assume the office of judging you before the time. And yet, after all, it believes itself not only to be genuine piety, but exalted piety; and it is looking forward with undoubting assurance to an eternal residence in heaven.

4th. And this leads me to say, fourthly, that there are many who fall into an error, the opposite of that which I have just noticed; and *mistake a heartless formality for genuine religion.*

The time may have been when they were awakened, and thought they were converted; and under that impression perhaps they came and joined themselves to the number of God's people. And there they began what were to them a new set of duties, such as private and family devotion, the daily reading of God's word, and coming to the communion table. For a while they performed these duties with delight; but at length their interest in them began to decline, and at no distant period they would willingly have abandoned them altogether, were it not that with them they must not only relinquish their hope, but give up all pretensions to christian character; and this would seem to be more difficult from the fact that they have already confessed Christ before men. Hence they keep on performing these external duties, while the heart is not in them; and actually grow more and more hardened, and more and more blinded, from this habit of trifling (for it is nothing better than that) with sacred things. From what you see of them in the world or even in their retirement, you would perhaps have no right to say that they were not christians; because they perform at least, many of those external acts which are supposed to indicate piety; but there is a hollowness, a heartlessness about it all, which, in the eye of God, makes it pass for nothing. Nevertheless, in this habit of formality, they keep themselves at ease. Though they are conscious that they have no christian enjoyment, yet they are sure to account for it in some way which is consistent with their having a principle of religion. On the whole, they are walking in a way which to them seemeth right.

5th. Many persons make themselves easy in *a habit of self-righteousness*; putting this in the place of genuine religion. They have a great idea of human merit, and substitute it in place of the

merit of Christ; or as the case may be, they will speak much *against* human merit, and after all, will practically place their supposed humility in leading them to do so, in the room of Christ's righteousness. This self-righteous spirit is extremely insidious; it can live upon any thing; and is sometimes found in its greatest strength, where the individual considers himself most free from it. More or less of it no doubt is consistent with true piety, and adheres to the christian till he reaches the gate of heaven; but in the christian it is never, as in the unrenewed man, the ruling passion. No matter how regular you may be in the discharge of every external duty; no matter how honest, and just, and charitable you may be; no matter how often you may read your Bible, or fall upon your knees, or attend social religious services,—if after all, the secret feeling of your heart is, that you are hereby doing something to purchase heaven, it is only the working of a spirit of self-righteousness. In this way no doubt multitudes are walking with great self-security. They are doing so much in one way and another, to subserve the interests of their fellow men, and so much that seems like obedience to the command of God, that they venture to hope and to believe that their good deeds do even catch and please the eye of Omniscience, and that God will accept of them as the price of their salvation. This is the secret feeling of the heart, even while they talk of the merit of Christ, and imagine perhaps that they are resting upon it.

6th. I observe, once more, that many persons make themselves easy *in an improper reliance on God's mercy.*

They single out the attribute of mercy from all God's other perfections, and make it the theme of perpetual eulogy. They speak of it as if it constituted the whole of the divine character; and as if his justice, and holiness, and truth, were completely absorbed by it. And without halting a moment at the fact that the Bible is entirely against them, they eagerly hasten to the conclusion, that under the administration of such a Being as God, they have little to fear. Perhaps they utterly annihilate the distinction between virtue and vice, and deny that the wicked will receive any punishment hereafter; or perhaps they flatter themselves that it will be of limited duration, and that the good and the bad will at last be equally happy. This conviction some of them will avow in the face of the world; and others will take the comfort of holding it without incurring the odium of confessing it. Perhaps they sometimes read in the Bible respecting the wrath of God, and the punishment which he will inflict upon his enemies; but it is so unlike any thing they here experience, and withal they read so much about God's mercy and love, that they conclude that these threatnings can have little or no meaning. And thus they go on from day to day, and from year to year, walking after the ways of their own heart, and in the sight of their own eyes, on the

presumption that God's mercy will cover all their guilt, and prepare them for the purity and glory of the heavens.

Such are some of the devices which men substitute for real religion. Each of them is a way which seemeth right unto many.

II. Let me now proceed, secondly, to show that *the end thereof is death.* In other words, if these devices are not seasonably abandoned, they will bring in their train everlasting destruction.

God has been pleased to offer salvation to men, but he has also been pleased to do it in his own way. The conditions are, repentance of sin, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a life of holy obedience.

Now a moment's reflection will show you that all the various devices which we have been considering, are utterly inconsistent with a compliance with these conditions; nay, that they are intended as a substitute for such compliance. If God requires the faith of the heart, surely a mere frozen orthodoxy does not meet that requisition. If he requires a surrender of the whole soul to himself, a consecration of all the faculties and affections, he will never accept a mere partial reformation. If he demands that the affections should be brought into exercise through an intelligent belief of his own truth, he will never accept in place of that the mere glow of animal feeling, much less the crude and irreverent workings of self-confidence and fanaticism. If he requires that men should be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, it cannot be enough that they should go through a round of external duties, when the heart has no part nor lot in the matter. If he requires that they should abandon their own righteousness as a ground of justification, he will not be satisfied that they should substitute their own works in the place of the merit of Christ. If he has denounced tribulation and anguish upon every impenitent sinner, he requires that his threatenings should be believed; and he will never be flattered into lenity by hearing his goodness praised, at the expense of his other attributes. You see, then, that, in every instance, God's terms of salvation are set aside, and the sinner ventures to make terms of his own. He may walk in either of these ways of which I have spoken, and he will not be walking in the straight and narrow way which the gospel marks out. Inasmuch, then, as he turns his back upon God's requisitions, nothing remains but that he must take the consequence in the loss of his soul.

Do you not perceive, my friends, that this self-flattery must contribute, at the last, greatly to heighten the sinner's surprise; that his consternation on finding himself irrecoverably lost will be great, just in proportion as the way in which he had been walking had seemed right to him? You had been counting all your life upon your orthodoxy, but death comes and discloses to you the fact that you were an orthodox rebel against God, and that though you could even contend manfully for the truth, yet you had never felt its sanctifying

power. You had broken off from some of your sins, and had undergone some change of feeling, which you had called regeneration; but in death you discover the appalling secret that the heart was left under the dominion of sin. You had talked much about religion, and had condemned others for their coldness, and had even dealt out denunciations against the real children of God, and had felt confident that you should be admitted to a high seat in glory; but oh! the surprise to find that you had mistaken animal feeling for christian affection, and zeal to advance the interests of a party for zeal to advance the honor of the Lord of hosts. You thought you were complying rigidly with God's requirements in diligently discharging all external duties, but it turns out that yours was the hollow homage of a formalist, or else that your efforts were made in the spirit of self-righteousness, and thus actually poured contempt upon the atonement of Christ. You thought that God would not be strict to mark iniquity; you even thought he was so merciful that you had nothing to fear from continuing in sin; but at the moment of your entering eternity the awful truth flashes upon you with overwhelming conviction, that God is terribly faithful to his threatenings, and that it is too late for you to avert the consequence of your disbelieving them. You had gone smoothly along, until you reached the verge of the precipice, making all your calculations for being in heaven as soon as you were dead; but, just at the last moment, your eyes are open upon your mistake. The heavens blacken, the lightnings flash, the tempest roars and rages, down plunges the immortal soul into the everlasting abyss, and there it sinks and tosses amid the waves of Jehovah's wrath, at the very time when it expected to be transformed into a seraph, and to be mingling in the songs of the redeemed. Oh! must not this be disappointment and wo unutterable? How will that way appear to the sinner, then, which seems so right to him now?

With two or three reflections, we shall conclude.

1. Our subject *exposes the folly of those who maintain, that it is no matter what we believe, provided only we are sincere.* There are those who maintain the most dangerous and fatal errors, who, if you attempt to reason with them, will instantly repel your arguments, and justify themselves on the ground, that they are as sincere in their belief as you are in yours; and that sincerity, even in error, will be sufficient to justify it. And there are some who even profess to be christians, who seem partly to fall in with the same sentiment, who speak of the abominations of the heathen, as if the fact of their being heathen completely annihilated their guilt. But, my friends, yield not, I pray you, to this delusion. You see the doctrine of our text is, that a man may be sincere, very sincere, in a course which will terminate in everlasting death. God has not left it at your option what to believe in respect to religion. He has revealed to you his truth; and that truth is something fixed, and definite, and unchange-

able; and he requires you to believe it; and you refuse to do so at your peril. You may hold as many false notions on the subject of religion as you will; you may flatter yourself that a mere moral life, or a mere round of attendance on the means of grace, will save you, or even that you shall be saved, let your character be what it may,—but God's declarations that "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;" and that the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment," remain just as true, and will have as terrible a fulfilment, as if you believed them ever so fully. Your believing, or not believing, does not at all affect God's truth, though it may affect unspeakably and eternally your own condition. It matters little what may *seem* right with you; the great question is, what *is* right, and, in practically deciding this, you decide your own everlasting destiny.

2. Learn from our subject *how much danger there is that the soul will be lost.* There are many sacrificing themselves to profligacy, and infidelity, and open impiety; and there are many others who become victims to a habit of good-natured carelessness; who, without being grossly vicious, are satisfied to let religion alone, and to have no part or lot in the matter. But beside these, there are a multitude who are travelling the downward road with a lie in their right hand; who have taken for their religious principles, not the declarations of God's word, but the dictates of their own corrupt inclinations; and by living at ease in sin, they are preparing ere long to wake from their dreams in surprise and horror. Beware, then, lest you get into some other path than that straight and narrow way which leads to heaven. Beware lest the peace which you experience, instead of being that peace which passeth understanding, should prove to be that deceitful calm which tells that there is a storm gathering, which will discharge itself in everlasting torrents of wrath.

Finally: *Let it be the commanding object of every individual to secure the salvation of his soul.* To sacrifice your soul is the easiest thing in the world. Only stay where you are, and the work is done. But if you will secure salvation, you must make a vigorous effort. You must not only break up this habit of carelessness, but you must resist every temptation to self-flattery. You must come out from false refuges, and come into the refuge which the gospel provides. You must resolve on a life of vigilance, and activity, and persevering exertion. You must resolve, and seek grace to enable you to execute the purpose that, in humble reliance on the merits of Christ for acceptance, you will live a sober, righteous, and godly life. Such a course, both in its progress and in its end, will be peace; but any other course, though it may be attended with that false tranquillity which delusion inspires, will terminate in the pangs of the second death. Oh, count every thing as less than nothing when weighed in the balance against your immortal soul!

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SERMON CCL.

BY JOHN H. CHURCH, D. D.
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THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.

Ephes. iii., 8.—*Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.*

The Apostle's eminent holiness appeared in his deep humility, as well as in his ardent love to the Saviour. He accounted himself less than the least of all the saints, while he labored more abundantly than they; and because he felt so sensibly his immense and ever-increasing obligations to the Redeemer, and his great failures in fulfilling them, he could think no one else so deficient as himself. This caused him the more to admire the rich and unmerited favor of being called, by grace, to preach the Saviour's unsearchable riches. This was his most delightful employment. Every faithful minister has a measure of the same love to Christ Jesus, and of the same delight in making known his transcendent excellence.

I would very humbly, my brethren, call your attention to this subject; and may God give unto us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, to behold his glory; then our meditations of him will be refreshing to us, and honorable to him.

Four things pertaining to the unsearchable riches of Christ, will now be considered.

The first is his divine glory. John says of him—In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God, and was God. This is the true God and eternal life. Paul declares that he is God over all, blessed for ever—the image of the invisible God—the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or prin-

cipalities, or powers—all things were created by him and for him; and he is before all things; and by him all things consist. In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. This fullness of the Godhead as really and as fully dwells in him, as in the Father. As he says, I am in the Father and the Father in me. I and my Father are one. Being in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God. All divine attributes and excellencies do therefore belong to Christ as much as to the Father. All these are ascribed to the Father and to the Son. Any appearance to the contrary is on account of his assumed office as mediator, and his being formed in fashion as a man. In this view of himself, he said, my Father is greater than I. The Father sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. And the Son says, I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And he finished the work which the Father gave him to do. He was obedient unto the death of the cross, because the Father gave him commandment to lay down his life. But still he was the true God as to his divine nature. The Jews understood him to make himself equal with God; and on this ground they demanded of Pilate his crucifixion, saying, We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God. His glory was hidden from his murderers. Had they known it, they would not have put him to death. But his disciples beheld his glory; and they honored him as they honored the Father. They saw in him every thing to love and admire, as the only begotten of the Father. Their joy in him was unspeakable and full of glory. But how little they knew of his infinite excellence! Even the angels of light are still learning "the glories of Immanuel."

The second is the unsearchable riches of his love.

> "His love is as large as his power,
> And neither knows measure nor end."

Like himself, it is from everlasting to everlasting, and has a length and breadth, and depth and height, which passeth knowledge. We learn something of it from his word, and from his wonderful works towards the children of men. With them was his delight, before the foundation of the world; and he rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, where he would make his love to abound. What but his boundless love could move him to undertake the work of man's redemption from endless wo? Yes,

> "He pitied rebels, when he knew
> The vast expense his love would cost."

He knew he must lay aside the glory which he had with the Father —be made flesh—be made under the law and its curse—live a life of poverty, and the sorest trials and sorrows, and suffer a death most cruel and shameful. But his love was equal to the undertaking. He *could endure the* whole, saying to the Father, I delight to do thy will.

The eternal covenant was accordingly made, which he should ratify with his dying blood. A multitude, which no man can number, was given to him as the reward of his obedience unto the death of the cross; and each of them can say,

"I was a traitor doomed to fire,
Bound to sustain eternal pains;
He flew on wings of strong desire,
Assumed my guilt and took my chains."

But this is not all. His love is manifested in numerous ways. The innumerable objects of it are variously situated, and do exceedingly grieve and try his love. How many he loves and redeems who show all manner of perverseness and ingratitude. What persevering kindness marked his conduct to Peter, who so wickedly denied him. And what unwearied long-suffering did he show to Saul, who breathed out threatenings and slaughter against his members, and persecuted them even unto strange cities. Who has not exceedingly grieved his love and wearied his kindness? Who, but a Saviour of quenchless love, could endure so much evil in those whom he saves? See the good Shepherd seeking his lost and perishing sheep; bringing them back to his fold, and bestowing on them the tenderest care. See how he continually intercedes for them, that their faith may not fail, nor their enemies triumph over them. What millions have already shared very richly in all the varieties of his boundless love—and so will millions more—and the whole, the immense multitude, will be for ever filled with his overflowing love. Who can comprehend such love as this? How unsearchable are its riches—vast and durable as eternity.

The third is the unsearchable riches of his mediation; or his admirable fitness and infinite sufficiency to save all the myriads of the redeemed.

He is admirably qualified to be mediator between God and us by assuming our nature. In him, God and man are united in one person. This fits him for his office. The parties between whom he mediates can repose in him the utmost confidence. In him the Father has this confidence, because he is his Son, the heir and partner of his throne, to whom he has delivered all things. He is chosen of God—his elect, in whom his soul delighteth. And the Father says to us, This is my beloved Son; hear ye him. To his Son he refers us, signifying that in him we must put our trust, as a faithful mediator. And how cheerfully we may do this, when we consider that he is our Kinsman-Redeemer, the Son of man, who has all possible knowledge of our case, and has in all things been made like unto his brethren, that he might manage all their concerns in the best manner possible. How could we choose a more suitable person to act in our behalf before God. How fit is he to be our Advocate with the Father, and to hold in his hands all our interests in time and eternity. What

perfect safety we have in committing every thing to him. The least doubt of this is a reproach to his name. But here is a mystery which we cannot fathom—the union of the Son of God and the Son of man in Christ Jesus. Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh for our salvation. O, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!

How suitable is Jesus the Lord to be our prophet, our priest and our king.

As prophet, he surpasses all others in the highest degree; for he has all divine and human knowledge. No man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him. No man hath seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. And who else is so able to declare the Father's counsels as his eternal Son? He is likewise a prophet raised up among his brethren, and so can speak to them face to face, and adapt his instructions to their circumstances. Who teacheth like him? Who ever spake with such authority? Even his enemies were constrained to say, Never man spake like this man. How many were astonished at his doctrine. How many heard from his lips the words of eternal life, as they had never heard them before. And think of the effect of his teaching—I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them and I in them.

Consider Jesus in his priestly office. Who but Immanuel, God with us, in our nature, could fulfil its vast, its sublime purpose. Here is a work which neither men nor angels could perform. None of them could repair the honor of God's violated law, and redeem transgressors from its curse. Nor could even the Son of God do this in his divine nature alone; for he could not as a mere divine person suffer for sin, or be made a curse for the redemption of those who had sinned. And therefore he took upon him the seed of Abraham; for in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. And thus being made of a woman, and made under the law, which we have transgressed, he has borne our sins in his own body on the tree. He has fulfilled the law, both by obedience and suffering. He obeyed in dying the death of the cross. This was the most signal act of his obedience. He was made sin for us; he had our sins charged to him, that he might be a sin offering for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. And hence we are justified by his blood, and made righteous by his obedience. And such is the dignity of his divine nature, and such the purity of his human nature, that his merits are abundantly sufficient for the salvation of all men. He is the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

Behold this Lamb of God; he gave himself for the life of the world. Consider the never-failing efficacy of his blood to expiate human guilt, and to cleanse from all unrighteousness. Contemplate the unsearchable riches of his obedience unto the death of the cross. For by this one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

But there is another view of his priestly office, which exceedingly enhances its preciousness to the redeemed. He ever lives to intercede for them. This he does to carry into effect the great design of his death on the cross. Having obtained eternal redemption for his people, he has entered into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for them. There he acts in their behalf; he pleads their cause against every accuser; he bestows on them the blessings of his grace; he procures the acceptance of their prayers and labors of love, and prepares a place for them, that they may be with him, see him as he is, and be like him. Wherefore he is able, and will save them to the uttermost, seeing he thus intercedes for them before his Father's throne. Well then could the Apostle triumphantly say, Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died—yea, rather that is risen again—who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us. O, the riches of the Saviour's intercession! What humble confidence it inspires as we approach the mercy-seat. Seeing that we have a great high-priest, that has passed into the heavens—Jesus the Lord God—let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. With what admiring and joyful views of the Saviour's intercession may the humble believer say,

"Now the gracious Mediator
Risen to the courts of bliss,
Claims for me, a sinful creature,
Pardon, righteousness, and peace."

But Jesus is king, as well as priest, on his throne; and how glorious and lovely does he appear in this office. Yes, he who once bore our sins and pains—who was once sorrowful unto death in Gethsemane, and crucified on Calvary, is now seated on a throne of glory, and has all authority in heaven and on earth. He is made head over all things unto the church. Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; he is just, and having salvation—meek and lowly in heart. Well may we rejoice in a King who is infinite in majesty and glory, in meekness and condescension. While the kingdom, the power, and the glory belong to him as the mighty God, he shows the tenderest compassion to the guilty and wretched, the poor and miserable. What riches of love and power dwell in the King of Zion. For what important purposes he reigns. How glorious are his comforts of grace in every sanctified soul; and with what consummate wisdom does

he order and overrule all things for the glory of his kingdom and the eternal blessedness of all his redeemed people. Heaven will be for ever filled with his praise.

The time would fail me to speak of all the endearing relations and forms of love and kindness which the blessed Jesus continually bears to the thousands, and thousands of thousands of his blood-redeemed people. He feeds his flock as a shepherd; he maketh them to lie down in green pastures, and leadeth them by the still waters. He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom. The bruised reed he will not break; the smoking flax he will not quench. He binds the broken-hearted; he raises up those that are borne down; he fills the hungry with good things; he comforts the sorrowful; he cheers the desponding; he supplies all their needs according to the riches of his glory; and he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all they ask or think, according to the power by which he is able to subdue all things unto himself. And because all fullness dwells in him, he says, I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters. How strikingly does this show the inexhaustible fullness there is in Christ.

The fourth consists in his being the everlasting life of all his redeemed in heaven. He is that eternal life that was with the Father, and was manifested to his disciples when they beheld his glory as the glory of the only begotten of the Father. But the Father hath given to him to have life in himself as manifested in the flesh, that he may be the eternal life of all his saints. All these are ransomed by his blood, and live by his life: as he saith, Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of waters, springing up to everlasting life. In heaven, the redeemed will be for ever with the Lord, to behold his glory and be filled with all his fullness. This prayer for them is then fulfilled—Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory. As the Father hath given him to sit on his throne, so he giveth them to sit with him on his throne. Thus they behold his face in righteousness, and are satisfied in being made like unto him. They are glorified in him, and he is glorified in them. They exalt his glory; and he rejoices in them, and they in him, with mutual and perfect joy. He is the fountain and source of their blessedness; and it is their exceeding joy to extol and bless his name, as their glorious Redeemer, who has loved them and washed them from

their sins in his own blood. The Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them and lead them unto living fountains of waters; and in them will his joy be for ever fulfilled.

And now from this subject we may learn,

1. The superior excellence of the knowledge of Christ. It is the knowledge of infinite divine excellence, and of perfect human excellence. Here you see all divine and human loveliness most sweetly united. Jesus is the brightness of the Father's glory, and also fairer than all the children of men. We beheld his glory, saith John, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. This glory the three disciples beheld on the mount, when he received honor and glory from God the Father, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory—This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. How highly did the disciples esteem those discoveries of his glory, and long for the continuance of the delightful vision, that they might know more of his excellence, and be more filled with his love. Paul had made high attainments in human knowledge; but he counted it all but loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ. He once had no desire to know him; he then thought him a mere man, and an impostor; but after God had shined in his heart to give him the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus, then he determined to know nothing but Christ and him crucified. And must not this be the purpose of every true believer? To him Jesus is exceedingly precious, altogether lovely, and the chief object of his delight. He is transcendently lovely in his person, in his offices, in his relations to his redeemed, and in all the works of his grace. How then should you long to increase in the knowledge of Christ.

2. The preaching of the gospel is a great blessing. It is preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ, for the purpose of your knowing and gaining these riches. And these are the only true riches which you can gain. All other riches fly away. Those who love them most and seek them the most earnestly, are the most disappointed in them. But how different are the riches of Christ. The more these are prized and sought, the more fully they are enjoyed. And they can never fail; they can never be lost. How dear to you should be the gospel and the faithful and constant preaching of it. What a blessing to have Christ continually set forth to your view in all his fullness, as your boundless and everlasting treasure. He is your unchangeable friend, your never-failing fountain of life, your all in all. How can you part with his gospel, or live without the preaching of his cross as the wisdom and power of God to your eternal enjoyment of his boundless love?

3. We see the worth of a saving interest in Christ. It is worth every thing. We can give nothing which is of equal value. He

that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son hath not life. Christ is eternal life. The loss of him is eternal death. Who, then, can estimate a saving interest in Christ too highly? It is every thing to the possessor. It secures to him every thing which he can really need. How can he want or lack any good thing, when Christ is his? Will not he who has given him Christ, with him also freely give him all things?

4. We learn the preciousness of that faith which makes the Saviour yours. Many think and speak lightly of faith. They think it a very trifling thing to believe in Christ, and speak with great confidence of their faith. They feel sure of salvation because they believe that Christ is the Saviour of the world. The devils believe this. The damned in hell believe this. But this faith does not save them. The faith which saves the soul is of God; it is his special gift. It is the fruit of his Spirit, spiritually enlightening the mind to discover the glory of Christ and his fitness and sufficiency as a Saviour, and so drawing the soul to him. This is the only way to make Christ ours, or to believe in him unto salvation. We may believe that Christ is the Saviour of the world, and yet never receive him so as to be saved by him. We may believe in the skill of a physician to heal our sickness; but how can we be healed, if we do not apply to him? So Christ and his unsearchable riches will profit you nothing, if you have not the faith of God's elect. O! think of the preciousness of this faith; what it will do for you; and how it will enrich your soul for ever. Prize it most highly; see that you obtain it, that Christ may be yours for ever.

5. We learn the vast importance of communicating the knowledge of Christ. How many need this knowledge. Where will you find a fellow-sinner who does not need it? Who can be saved without Christ? Who can be blessed for ever without his unsearchable riches? In him there is boundless sufficiency for our whole world. But how many perish for want of the knowledge of Christ; and how shall this knowledge be obtained but by its being given to them? Here we find much, even a great work, to be done. And who, that knows Christ, cannot do something to make him known to others? How much the parent may do to make his children and household acquainted with the Saviour. How much may be done by the Sabbath-school teacher. How much may Christians do to increase each other's knowledge of Christ, and the riches of his glory. How often should their discourse turn upon this subject. What theme of conversation can they find so profitable as this? How much it would enliven their affections to Christ, to each other, and to all his saints; and how much they might do to lead others to the knowledge of the Saviour, by speaking of his worth and preciousness, of their perishing need of him, and of his everlasting treasures of grace. Who can

truly know Christ, and not long that others should know him, and partake of his fullness? Who can love the Saviour and not ardently desire that every one should love him? And how important that Christ should be fully preached. What a noble subject for every preacher is Christ and his cross. Who can exhaust it? Who can find no more to say, or be satisfied with what he has already said? Who will not bring from his treasure things new as well as old, if Christ dwells in his heart by faith, and he is daily sitting at his feet to learn more of his divine and human excellences, of his offices and works of salvation? How freely should ministers speak one to another of these things, and also to those under their pastoral care. It is the knowledge of Christ, and him crucified, with which every soul must be fed to arrive at the stature of perfection. Here is the cause of our lameness and unfruitfulness—we are not fed as we need to be with the bread of life.

To conclude: let all feel more sensibly their obligations to love and praise the Redeemer. Think who and what he is in himself, and what he is and will be to you for ever, if you make him your friend. And will not your hearts overflow with love, and your lips utter ceaseless praises to his name?

O! look to this Lamb of God. Let his infinite loveliness now engage your affections. Make his riches your chief treasure. Then will you praise him while you have any being. Amen.

SERMON CCLI.

BY JOHN H. CHURCH, D. D.

THE POWER OF THE CROSS.

JOHN iii., 14, 15.—*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

THE manner of our Saviour's teaching was transcendently excellent. It was peculiarly adapted to the circumstances of his hearers—to their habits of life, and modes of thinking. He illustrated truth by familiar objects. Such an object was the brazen serpent. Its design and use were well known to Nicodemus; and therefore, Christ selected it to explain to him the doctrine of his

own crucifixion for the sins of men, that they might be saved by faith in his blood, shed on the cross. As the brazen serpent was an effectual remedy for bitten, dying Israelites; so is Christ crucified an effectual remedy for men perishing in sin.

I propose to consider the remedy; its necessity; its application; and its efficacy.

1st. The remedy.—This in each case was of a singular character. For the dying Israelites bitten by fiery serpents, the Lord directed Moses to make a serpent of brass, and place it on a pole, that the wounded might look on it and be healed. This was a divine, not human, device. What mortal would have thought of such a method of saving men from death? But, however strange, or unnatural it might seem to men, it was God's method for this purpose. So is Christ crucified a very singular method of saving sinners from eternal death. It is altogether above the wisdom of men or angels. Who could have conceived that the eternal Son of God could die on the cross to redeem guilty men from everlasting distruction! But God devised a way for this to be done. His Son has a body prepared for him. He comes in the flesh, in the likeness of man, in the form of a servant, or of one bound to suffer, and is obedient to the death of the cross. Thus he was lifted up as the brazen serpent was, bearing the sins of men in his own body on the tree, that they, by looking on him might have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of all their sins, be cleansed from all unrighteousness, and have everlasting life. This is the method of our salvation—this is the remedy for healing us of all our spiritual maladies. Who will not admire the divine wisdom, which is seen in the cross of Christ? Christ crucified is the wisdom of God.

2d. The necessity of this remedy. This is as necessary for perishing sinners, as the brazen serpent was for bitten, dying Israelites. These died of their wounds, till God prescribed this remedy. All other means proved ineffectual. This became the settled conviction of all. Hence they besought Moses to pray unto the Lord that he would take away the serpents. For while these continued to bite, death was the inevitable consequence. How absolutely necessary then was God's remedy. And is not Christ crucified as necessary for the salvation of guilty men? These are exposed to eternal death; for they have sinned against God; and the wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. This death is the penalty of God's law. Those who suffer it, go away into everlasting punishment. Now, how can any one, how can you, my hearers, be delivered from this endless misery? It is only by the death of Christ on the cross. Christ must be lifted up to make an atonement for your offences. He must bear your sins in his own body on the tree. No other sacrifice can expiate your guilt, or free you from the

curse of the law. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; as it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree. It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Those were appointed as typical sacrifices; and they were all fulfilled in Christ, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. In them, God had no pleasure as actually atoning for the sins of men. But he declared himself well pleased in his Son, when he came in the flesh to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and he showed his acceptance of this great sacrifice by raising him from the dead, and by exalting him at his right hand as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and the remission of sins through faith in his name. But there is no other way of return to God, or acceptance with him. Christ has said, "No man cometh to the Father but by me." And Peter said, "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven, given among men whereby we must be saved." And therefore, it is declared, "He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." Can you be saved without this crucified Redeemer? Is there any other to take away your guilt—to deliver you from the wrath to come? How hopeless would be your case, without Christ and his cross: as hopeless as that of a bitten Israelite, but far more dreadful; his was the death of the body, yours would be the eternal death of the soul and body in hell.

3d. The application of this remedy. This is by faith, or looking to Christ in faith. The brazen serpent was lifted up, was suitably elevated on a standard, that the wounded might behold it and be healed. So was the Son of man lifted up on the cross, that perishing sinners may behold him by faith, and be saved from all their sins. And we may discover a striking analogy between the two methods of deliverance from death.

In both cases, the power of God is to be acknowledged. His power healed the bitten Israelite; and his power saves the perishing sinner. No means are effectual without his blessing. We should be deeply impressed with this truth, as we use the means; otherwise we shall ascribe that power to them, which belongs only to God.

The dying Israelite could take no glory to himself, that he was healed by looking to the brazen serpent. He must simply look and be healed. He must wholly renounce his own wisdom and skill, and rely entirely on God to prescribe and bless the means of his remedy. So the perishing sinner can take none of the glory of his salvation to himself. He must look in faith to the dying Lamb of God. He must glory in the cross of Christ, and in this alone.

The bitten Israelite felt himself a dying man. His wound would

end in death, in spite of all his efforts. He must totally despair of healing himself. And such is the case of the sinner. He is condemned to death. He is dead in sin, and dead in law. He must despair of ever giving himself life. His life, his salvation must come wholly from another source. As a lost and perishing sinner, he must look to Christ crucified for deliverance. Here is his only hope of securing the life of his soul; as the bitten Israelite's only hope was in looking to the brazen serpent.

He thus looked, because this was God's appointment. He might not be able to tell how he would be healed, by simply looking on the elevated serpent. But he knew that this was God's remedy; and for this reason, he was bound to use it. Here was no room to hesitate or object. His duty was as plain as possible. So it is in looking to the cross of Christ for salvation. This is God's appointment. And this is his command, that you believe in his Son as crucified for your sins. How can this truth be made more plain than he has made it in his word? How often it is repeated? In how many ways is it illustrated and explained? With what sublimity is it enforced? How can you evade the conviction of duty?

The bitten Israelite would look on the brazen serpent with expectation of being healed; and because God had so directed. He was to feel that God ordained it as an effectual remedy, and would make it so, when rightly used. And so the sinner should look to Christ with believing expectation of being saved by faith in him. For this is his word concerning his Son, that there is life in him for the perishing sinner; this is his promise, that whosoever believeth in him, shall not perish, but have everlasting life; and Christ says, "He that believeth in me, hath everlasting life." With what entire confidence then you should look to a crucified Saviour for salvation? Never doubt his power to save to the uttermost every one that comes to him; nor in the least question his truth and faithfulness. He never disappoints the soul that trusts in him.

The wounded in Israel would make no delay in seeking a cure. Who would suffer his wound to fester and rankle day after day, when he might immediately look and be healed? Who would endure the anguish and pain of such delay, or endanger his life, when the remedy was at hand? And why does the perishing sinner refuse present relief from the burden and distress of sin? The Saviour is at hand, and can as well relieve him now as at any future time. Why is there any delay in looking to a crucified Redeemer? Have you not too long delayed? Too long indulged your sin? Too long grieved the Saviour's love? Must he wait still longer for you to be ready, and willing to be healed of your spiritual maladies? Is there no danger in your delay? Does not your state grow worse? Do you

not dishonor the heavenly Physician? Do then as a bitten Israelite would do: now look and live.

But while there is such analogy between the two cases, there is in other respects a dissimilarity. For instance, it required no change of heart in one bitten by the serpent, to look to the brazen serpent and be healed. A person of any moral character could do it. But whosoever looks to Christ crucified in saving faith, is born of God. His faith is the exercise of a new and holy principle of divine life. That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit; it is something spiritual and holy in its nature. And saving faith in Christ, is the act of this new principle in the soul. The unrenewed sinner will not come to Christ; he will not look to him and be saved. His evil heart of unbelief prevents his doing it. This is his most heinous sin; and nothing but spiritual grace will ever overcome it; and make him willing to look and live, or to believe in Christ and have eternal life.

It required no conviction of sin, and guilt in a wounded Israelite to look to the serpent of brass and live. It was enough to know that he was bitten, and in danger of death. But he that looks to a crucified Saviour, must feel that he is exceedingly sinful, and guilty, and deserves to perish. This conviction tends to prepare him to welcome Christ to his heart, and to rely on him as being such a Saviour as he needs.

The bitten Israelite needed only to have the venomous bite healed, that the life of the body might be preserved. But the perishing sinner needs far more done for him. He must have the remission of his sins by the shedding of the Saviour's blood; and he must be cleansed from the pollution of sin, by the sprinkling of his blood. We read of both in the gospel. We are not only guilty or deserving of endless punishment; but we are also vile, unclean, abominable in the sight of God, by the defiling nature of sin. Our guilt is taken away by the blood of Christ, as shed to atone for our sins; and our vileness is removed by the same blood, as sprinkled upon us for our spiritual cleansing. The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. It is a fountain set open for sin and uncleanness, to wash them away. In coming to Christ, we come to the blood of sprinkling. This purges the conscience from dead works, to serve the living God. It purifies us from the defilement of sin. So that we are to look to Christ crucified, not only for pardon, but also for sanctification. Of his fulness, we are to receive even grace for grace. He is our life, even the eternal life of our souls. He is to live in us, and we are to live a life of faith on him for complete salvation—he being made of God, unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. He delights to bestow salvation freely, and abundantly on the poor and needy, the lost and wandering, the helpless and wretched.

If the dying Israelites in the case before us, could see no fitness in the brazen serpent to heal their wounds, they could see the goodness and power of God in providing this remedy, and making it effectual. But the Spirit reveals and faith discerns a fitness in the gospel remedy. Here is the Son of God manifested in the flesh, in the likeness of men, and in the form of a servant, to atone for our sins, by dying on the cross to satisfy the justice of God. By his crucifixion, he makes infinite satisfaction to divine justice. He most highly honors every divine attribute. He fulfils and magnifies the divine law. He does the highest possible honor both to the precept and the penalty. He dies in our stead, that we may have forgiveness through his blood; and by his obedience, we are made righteous. What admirable fitness there is in this remedy? With what entire satisfaction, we may look to it; and consider how suited it is to our case? We are condemned to death; but Christ dies in our room. We have no righteousness in which we can appear with acceptance before God; but by faith, we are made the righteousness of God in Christ. O, what a Saviour is Christ crucified! What boundless sufficiency there is in him for a world perishing in their sins? What manifold wisdom is here seen? Here, also, we see that God is love. For here is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and gave his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Here you see also his immutable, impartial justice; for he spared not his own Son, but bruised him, put him to grief, and made his soul an offering for sin. Here you see God's infinite hatred of sin, by so severely condemning it in the sufferings of his dearly beloved Son. And how does he delight in mercy, when he spared not his own Son, that he might spare you, for his sake, and make you an everlasting monument of his grace. And what affecting views you have here of your ill-desert, your vileness, which rendered such a sacrifice necessary for your salvation. Can you look on him, whom you have pierced by your sins, and not be affected? Behold the Lamb of God, and receive everlasting life from his bleeding wounds.

4th. Its efficacy never fails.—This remedy never loses its power. The typical remedy was effectual, whenever it was used. This was God's promise: "Every one that is bitten, when he looketh on the serpent of brass, he shall live." The promise was fulfiled. "For it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." There was no failure in that remedy. And there is none in the far greater remedy of the gospel. Who has ever looked to the cross of Christ by living faith, and come short of heaven? Where has faith in Christ proved ineffectual? Where has the promise failed? "He that believeth on the Son, as lifted up on the cross, shall not perish, but have eternal life." Is not this remedy always the same? The same yesteday, to-day, and for-

ever? How can you doubt its efficacy? How great is the sin, to distrust its power, to save your soul. Beware of the horrid crime of not believing in this crucified Saviour. How excedingly will it aggravate your final condemnation. O look to the Lamb of God.

In view of this subject, we learn,—

1st. The free offer of salvation to every perishing sinner. The remedy in Israel was free to every one who needed it. No exception, no limitation was made. Any one who was bitten, had full warrant to look and be healed. And so is the gospel remedy free to any one perishing in sin. Whosoever believeth in Christ, shall not perish. Whosoever will, may freely make Christ his Saviour. His salvation is suited to the case of every sinner. The promise of eternal life is sure to every one, who receives and rests upon Christ alone for salvation, as he is freely offered in the gospel. And this free offer of Christ to every one is to be made by every minister of the word. Every one is to be directed to look unto Christ and be saved. To every one the Apostolic exhortation is to be addressed—Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Let me then say to each and every one of you, you are not excluded from the free offer of the Saviour, except you exclude yourself by refusing to look to him for life. If you perish, it is because you persist in rejecting a crucified Saviour.

2d. It is through dislike of the remedy that it is refused. Could a bitten, dying Israelite refuse the remedy freely provided for him, if he were pleased with it? Would he not rather immediately use it? And will not the perishing sinner as readily use the gospel remedy for his salvation, if in heart he is really pleased with it? How then can he refuse? It is exactly suited to his condition—he infinitely needs it—it is freely offered—he can have it on barely accepting it, without money and without price. Say not in thine heart, "Who shall ascend into heaven—or descend into the deep?" The word is nigh thee. Christ is at the door. He stands and knocks for a willing reception. His heart is full of tenderness—his hands full of blessings. Do you open the door? Do you make him welcome? Do you look to him to give you eternal life? to give you repentance and the remission of sins—to give you his Spirit to be in you as the fountain of life? Or do you turn away, and show that you are not pleased with this method of salvation? Can you state any other reason why you refuse this remedy? Who has ever refused it, except through dislike? Why did the Jews reject Christ? They saw no comeliness in him that they should disire him. They desired a very different Saviour. He was to them a rock of offence. And is not every unbeliever offended in him? "Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." If you refuse Christ, is it not because you take offence at his person, as the true God manifest in

flesh? or at his cross on which he bore the sins of men? or at his holy requirements. Are you not unwilling to see and feel your lost condition, and your absolute dependence on the merits of Christ alone for salvation?

3d. The unbeliever perishes without excuse. What excuse could a bitten Israelite have, who died because he would not look to the brazen serpent, as God directed? Would not every one say that he lost his life by his own folly? And will it not be so with the unbeliever? He knew how freely he could be saved. But he rejected the gracious offer. He would not look to Christ and his cross for salvation. How confounding will be the words of the Redeemer from his judgment seat—I called and ye refused. I bade you look to me and live, but ye would not. I would have healed you, but you despised my grace. I would have saved you from your sins, but you would not forsake them. Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire.

4th. This subject suggests the grand means of growing in grace. *Looking unto Jesus.* Do you feel the need of deeper repentance? Look to him whom you have pierced by your sins. Do you feel the need of being quickened in the Divine life? Look to Christ who is your life and strength. Do you thirst for more grace, and long to be filled with the fruits of righteousness? Look to him who says, I will give unto him that is athirst, of the water of life freely.

Finally; in view of this subject we may well ask, Why will any perish, when such a remedy is at hand? Had Moses gone into the tents of the wounded and dying, after the brazen serpent was lifted up, how sharply might he have remonstrated against their conduct in refusing the means of healing and life? And how should your conduct be regarded in neglecting Christ and his cross? Is the loss of your soul a small evil? Will you find everlasting punishment a light thing? Will endless banishment from the tree of life and the blessings of heaven be a trifling affair? Have you considered these things? Will it not be well to consider them before you take another step in the downward course? O stop. Turn and look to the cross of Christ. See his bleeding wounds. Think how ready he is to wash away your sins in his own blood—to deliver you from the wrath to come, and give you everlasting life. He says, Come unto me. I will receive you, and be your friend and portion forever. Will you refuse? Can you reject this Almighty and compassionate Saviour?

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SERMON CCLII.

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Philadelphia.

THE SUPREMACY OF THE LAWS.

Rom. xiii. 1—7.—*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Wilt thou not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same:— For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to* execute *wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore* ye *must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For, for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.*

In this passage, Paul advances the following important principles:

1. That government is instituted by God. It has not its origin in man; and is not to be regarded merely as of human arrangement. It is the appointment of the Ruler of the nations. The necessity of government has not grown out of any conventional arrangements of society; nor may it be dispensed with by any conventional arrangements. God intends that there should be government and law; and intends to be regarded as having himself instituted civil authority.

2. Submission to government and to law is a duty to God. It is not merely because we have chosen the rulers, or because we have made the laws, or because our interest is involved in the execution of them, but it is because God has made it our duty to obey the laws as an act of submission to him, and as recognizing his authority over nations.

3. Resistance to the laws, except in matters of conscience, is resistance against God, and is a sin against him. It is not merely that property is injured, and life endangered, and the peace of the community disturbed, and rights jeoparded; but it is that the arrangements of the Supreme Ruler of all are interfered with, and his own government resisted, that constitutes the main evil of a disregard of the laws of civil government.

4. One design of government is to protect the innocent in the exercise of their rights. Rulers are appointed by God for this end.

They are his ministers, acting in his place, and by his authority. Of course, they sin against him if they do not do it. They not only betray the interests of those who clothe them with office, and are recreant to the high trust conferred by men, but they are guilty of disregarding the duty they owe to God, and of unfaithfulness to him.

5. It is also the design of civil government to punish the violaters of the laws. The magistrate bears the sword for this object; and he is bound to restrain and punish wickedness as an act of duty to God. This office is God's only ordinance in this world for this purpose. He has taken away the sword from individuals, who, in a state of nature might execute vengeance, and has given it to the magistrate. And it is now the purpose of God, that punishment shall be administered by the magistrate, and according to the laws, and not by individuals, or by mobs. And it further follows from this, that if the magistrate does not punish offences according to the laws, they are to go unpunished—except as God shall himself punish them in the administrations of his Providence. For he has commissioned no other authority to do this but the civil powers.

These are the vital principles contained in the Bible on the subject of civil government. These principles are to remain the same, and are to guide us in all our discussions on the subject. It may be added here, that the subject was attended with much more difficulty when Paul penned the text than it is now. It was not then merely a general question whether submission should be rendered to the laws, but it was whether submission should be rendered to the corrupt and bloody monarchs who in such rapid succession occupied the throne of the Cesars. Paul wrote this epistle either near the close of the reign of Claudius, or in the time of Nero. And the question which could not but agitate the minds of christians, was not merely whether they should submit to civil government in general, but whether they should submit to the government of such men as "the dark unrelenting Tiberius, the furious Caligula, the feeble Claudius, the profligate and cruel Nero, the beastly Vitellius, and the timid inhuman Domitian."

Yet the great principle was advanced, that, even under the reign of such men, we are to yield submission to the powers that be, and to acknowledge government as the institution of God. In our own land the question is of much more easy solution. Here the laws are what they should be, or may easily be made so by the people themselves. Here no such question agitates the bosom, as whether we shall yield to the arbitrary enactments of such men as Tiberius and Nero; here there can be no reason for disregarding the laws on the ground that they are unequal and unjust.

But, though the grounds for the discussion of this subject have been changed, the propriety of discussion still remains. Within a few years past a state of things has arisen in our land—to the surprise

of every good and peaceful citizen—which renders it proper to discuss the the subject again in every way in which discussion at all is proper. It is appropriate in the pulpit not as a matter of politics; not to agitate the public mind by any examination of the *subjects* which have led to the late extraordinary scenes; but simply with reference to the inquiry, what is the Scripture doctrine on the subject, and in what way shall we as citizens discharge our duty to God in showing our respect to the laws. You will bear me witness that I have not unduly introduced any reference to political matters, or agitating public questions into this place. Nor shall I on this occasion I trust, depart at all from the proprieties of this place and day; and though I must allude to the painful disregard of the laws which has been lately manifested in this land, it will be done simply for the purpose of illustration, and so as not to depart from the course which is appropriate to the pulpit on subjects connected with morals and religion.

The painful events to which I refer, are such as the following: The mobs in the city of New York; the burning of the convent in Charleston, Massachusetts; the hanging of five men who were gamblers at Vicksburg, without the trial of law; the scourging of Northern citizens in Virginia and Tennessee; the destruction of property at St. Louis and St. Charles, and the murder at Alton; the burning of MacIntosh at St. Louis; and the recent outrage and destruction of property in this city. All these have been alike, though on different subjects, and in different parts of our country, in the following respects: namely, that they have occurred without the regular process of law, under highly excited passions, in spite of the police, and in defiance of the laws of the land; that they have been in most instances connected with the question about freedom of discussion, and in all instances have resulted in the violation of either the property, the rights, or the lives of others.

Had but a single instance of disregard to the laws occurred in the land, and had that been met by the prompt, and decided indignation of the whole community, the case would have been little alarming. Or had the excitement occurred only on one subject, or in one section of the nation, there would have been much less in it to demand public attention. But the reverse of all this has been true. Every part of the land has been disgraced with such scenes. Disregard to law and to the rights of property has extended to many subjects, and has been increasing. Attentive observers, also, cannot but have remarked a deplorable change in public opinion among the more respectable classes of the community on the subject. At first, there was but one sentiment, and that was a sentiment of decided indignation against the disregard of the laws. But, unless I err, there is by far less indignation felt and expressed at present. The sentiment is gaining ground, and is advanced, sometimes guardedly, and at others openly, that there are evils in the community which the law cannot

punish, and which can be met only by the people taking the law into their own hands. There is a feeling that when there is any thing that is deemed indecorous, or deficient in taste or propriety, it is proper for a mob to suppress it. And when an outrage is committed; when the police has shown its want of power to restrain, or when the magistracy has connived at the violation of the laws, and at the destruction of property, there is an extensive feeling gaining ground in the community that it is well, now that the outrage is done, that it was done. Respectable citizens condemn it in faint tones, and the press lifts a feeble voice, and the affair is suffered to die away without much effort to bring the offenders to justice. Or if a murder is committed, a jury is unable to convict for it; or if an outrage is committed on person or property, the offenders by common consent are allowed to escape. In many circles you may hear the sentiment advanced—and almost without exciting surprise—that there are things which can be restrained or punished only by a mob; and the growing want of feeling on the subject is one of the most alarming things in our land. Any one can see that if this sentiment is suffered to advance, the period is not far distant when *all* our institutions shall be held at the disposal of a mob; and when our judges shall hold their offices, and our ministers preach the gospel, and the affairs of our banks shall be administered, and every thing pertaining to the public welfare shall be conducted at the discretion and under the control of those who set at defiance all law and all restraint.

Under these circumstances, it is important that the whole subject should receive the profound attention of every member of this community who prizes our civil and religious institutions, and who has any regard for the supremacy of the laws. In the further persecution of this subject, therefore, I propose—

I. To show the necessity and importance of the supremacy of the laws, or of a government of law; and,

II. The way in which this may be secured.

There are the three following kinds of government among men:

(1.) The will of a single despot, of one absolute sovereign, holding his office either by hereditary title, or by usurpation. His will is law. His caprice is law. His passion is law. Of course, in such a case there can be no security of rights. There can be no permanency in any plans for public improvement. No man has any security of his life, his property, no security that his plans can be consumated. The will of the despot may change in a moment; or the whole affairs of the State may be changed in a moment by the accession of a tyrant of different, yet equally capricious character. The only basis of calculation in regard to any plan of improvement, or any rights of person or property, is the life of the individual despot, or what may be known of his individual character. The reader of history will recall a full illustration of this in the rapid succession

of the despots that hastened the fall of the Roman empire, from Tiberius to Domitian. An illustration is furnished now in the Turkish dominions, where the sceptre of a despot is swayed over what was once the fairest portion of the world, and where desolation now reigns, because the rights and securities of life and property, such as is furnished by an administration of law, are unknown. And the world has scarcely recovered from the horror which was produced by the reign of despotism in the bloody scenes of the French revolution.

(2.) The will of a mob.—This differs from the former only in the fact that there are *many* despots instead of one, and that the despotism is more intolerable. There are many capricious minds instead of one; there are many under the influence of passion instead of one; there is all the evil of a want of stability and of principle in a multitude instead of an individual. An individual, however lost to virtue he may be, feels some sense of responsibility to his fellow men, or has some desire to transmit his name to posterity, as not among the most abandoned of the race; a mob has none. An individual, however capricious he may be, has *some* stability of character, or something which may be the basis of a calculation. A mob has none. However perverted and wicked may be the principles of such men as Nero, or Danton, or Robespierre, it is possible to learn how they will act in given circumstances; but no one can determine on the future movement of a mob. An attack on gamblers, or on a convent, or a church, is no evidence that the abhorrence of gamblers, and convents, and churches will have any permanency, or that the fury of the mob will not spend itself on banks, or colleges, or private dwellings. It may be added, that when this spirit becomes prevalent in any community, it ends in single despotism. Some individual is found more bold and talented than the rest, that rises on the whirlwind of passion, and by terror and arms bows the multitudinous passions and caprices to his own. On all accounts such a single despotism is preferable; and God ordains that no community shall long remain without the operation of some established form of government and law.

(3.) The third mode of government is that of law. It matters not, so far as we are now concerned, whether the laws are made by a single sovereign hereditary or elective; or by a monarch in connection with a representative legislature; or by a hereditary aristocracy; or by representatives of the people; or by the people themselves in their assembled character. One form of administration is undoubtedly preferable to another in many respects, but all unite in this, that *it is a government of law* in contradistinction from the caprice of an individual, or of a multitude. The laws are known. They are formed deliberately, and are promulgated. They are settled by what is recognized as competent authority, and they are not changed suddenly or by caprice.

God intended that there should be such government over men;

and it is to laws so made—if not contravening his own—that he requires submission. The importance and advantages of this mode of government over the capricious will of a despot, or of a mob, may be seen by the following considerations:

First. This alone can give security and prosperity to a people. It matters not so much what the laws *are*, as that there *are* laws, and that they are known, and that they will be executed. All rights of property, and all improvements depend on this. No man will clear and improve a farm unless there is law that will protect him; and the want of this security is the cause of the desolation which reigns in the Turkish empire, in Arabia, in Africa, and in the regions of despotism generally. All public improvements require time, and the fixedness and the security which can be furnished by laws alone. The purposes connected with the endowment of a college, a school, a canal company, a banking institution, with manufactures and with commerce, can never be accomplished, rarely more than commenced, in a single generation. They stretch into future times, and demand the continued protection of the laws. They must reach on beyond the life of an individual, and beyond the capricious will of a mob, or a despot, or the purposes cannot be accomplished. They demand the permanency of laws that are known, and the plighted faith of a whole people that cannot soon change. The universities of Oxford and Cambridge have held on their way, diffusing the blessings of science and religion over England and the world more than a thousand years, because the law which protects them has not been at the control or caprice of the sovereigns, and because there has been the plighted faith of the whole nation to secure them. In Arabia, in Africa, in the Ottoman empire no such institutions have been founded, none could be maintained. The will of an individual—especially when the scimitar may create a change of despots in an hour—is too capricious to furnish any security for permanent investment. In our own country there are more rights vested on the presumption of the stability and permanence of the laws than in any other on the face of the globe. All our agricultural improvements; our farms and plantations; our banks, colleges, churches, manufactories, railroad investments, religious seminaries, hospitals and asylums are founded on the presumption of the permanence and stability of the laws; and the announcement that the caprice of a mob or of a despot was to rule hereafter in this land, would cripple or destroy them all in a day.

Secondly. God's government is a government of law. Though he is an individual and an absolute Sovereign, and though no one can control him, yet such in his view is the importance of a government of law, that he has made his entirely such. There is no mere will. There is no caprice. There is no change from passion or whim. Men know what his law is, what to depend on, and they can act on it with the utmost certainty. They calculate with unerring

conviction on the laws of nature, and are assured that there will be no change from caprice. The earth "spinning, sleeps on her axle," without the slightest variation; the laws of light and motion in the heavenly bodies are the same always; and alike in the natural and the moral world, God observes unvarying rules. The position of the heavenly bodies can be calculated with certainty for ages yet to come; and such is the stability of his empire, that men always know what will meet his approbation, and what his frown; and in the most absolute and independent government of the universe, that depending on the will of an individual of infinite power, there is the most profound regard paid to law, and the utmost conceivable permanency of administration. What would the affairs of the universe be, if his government were like a capricious earthly despotism, or like the administration of a mob?

Thirdly. So important is the supremacy of the laws that God requires us to submit to them, even when better laws could be made, unless they violate the dictates of conscience. Thus in our text, he required submission to the laws of the Roman empire; though no one can doubt that a more desirable administration can be easily conceived than that of Caligula or Nero. That unequal laws may be changed in a proper way, no one can doubt, nor that it is the right and privilege of a people to bring about such changes in a peaceful and proper manner. But when the laws violate none of the dictates of conscience, and command nothing which God forbids, it would be attended with more evil to disregard and disobey them, to unsettle the stability of government and the permanent arrangement of things, than submission to them would be. The one would be a private evil; the other a public calamity; and an individual evil is to be submitted to rather than to disturb the public peace.

It is from considerations such as these, that the Bible every where enjoins submission to the laws of the land; and that the Apostles and the Redeemer himself were among the most obedient citizens of the Roman empire. "Render, therefore, unto Cesar," said the Saviour, "the things which are Cesar's; and unto God the things that are God's." Math. xxii. 21. We are free, said he on another occasion from paying the public tax, "notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou" said he to Peter, "to the sea and cast a hook, and take up the fish that cometh first up; and when thou hast opened his mouth thou shall find a piece of money; that take and give unto them for thee and me." Math. xvii. 27. "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king." 1st Pet. ii. 17.

To this view there stands opposed the one that has been recently acted on in this nation, and that is becoming so prevalent even in the better portions of the community. It is, that when there is a course of conduct that is supposed in any way to outrage or offend public sentiment; when there prevails an evil which the law does not de-

scribe or which it cannot punish; when the regular operation of law would be too dilatory or too uncertain in its issue, it is the right of any portion of the community to take the matter into their own hands, and inflict summary vengeance on the offenders. This is done sometimes by the mere excited feelings of a populace and under cover of the night; sometimes by an impannelled mock jury or a mock court of men sustaining a fair standing in the community or even an office in the church; and sometimes by an armed mob prepared for burning, or murder. The plea, when a plea is attempted, is, that there are evils which the laws do not reach, and yet which endanger the welfare of the community. To this I reply:

1. If the laws do not reach the evil, then let laws be made that can do it. The power of making laws, resides in the community itself; and it is the fault of the community if they are not what they should be. But shall justice be defied, and all order and right set at naught, because a man has done that which no law forbids?

2. There are other ways of removing folly, indiscretion, and offences against public taste and a sense of propriety than by this summary vengeance. If a thing is erroneous, argument may be opposed to it; if foolish, ridicule may be applied; if offensive to the public taste, the public should stand aloof from it. Follies soon wear themselves out, or change for others; and if left undisturbed, a correct public sentiment will soon remove them. If a man chooses to make himself ridiculous by his dress, the cut of his hair, his beard, or by his gait; or if he chooses to do it by the selection which he makes of his companions and associates; or if the female sex shall disregard the proprieties of their station, and the feelings of the community; who can deny the absolute right to do it? Who has a right to molest or disturb them? Such things can be put down without constables, or bailiffs, or courts, or mobs. The most potent laws in any community are the *unwritten* laws which are secretly and silently executed, and whose influence no one can long and safely resist.

3. Is it not known that the very way to propagate obnoxious sentiments is to excite the spirit of a mob, and to disregard the laws of the land? The whole community is at once excited in behalf of the persecuted, and in behalf of sentiments that are opposed in a form contrary to the laws. Such is human nature. The burning of a convent will do more than any thing else to turn the public favor towards the sentiments inculcated there. The murder of a man by a mob will do more than can be done in any other way to spread his sentiments through the community. The fire which is kindled to destroy an edifice professedly devoted to free discussion, does more to spread the sentiments to which it is devoted than the arguments of its friends; and the price which the edifice cost could in no way be employed to spread the sentiments so far as by its being made to shed a blaze abroad at night, under the control of a mob, over a great city. The

sentiments in this community which are deemed obnoxious by so large a portion, have been diffused more by the disregard of the laws in resisting their propagation, and by the stripes, and execrations, and blood, and burning, which an attempt to propagate them has met with, than by all the itineracies of travelling agents, and all the books which a groaning press has sent forth, and all the newspapers and pamphlets which a burdened mail has carried to the extremities of the land.

4. On the principle contended for, to wit, that there are some offences which the laws cannot reach, and which are to be met in despite of the laws, who is safe? To-day it is held that gamblers shall be executed, and it is done. To-morrow, and with the same propriety, the fury of the mob shall be turned against those who have themselves thus set at defiance the laws. To-day the fury of the mob shall rage against a convent—to-morrow against an offensive press. One infuriated and excited mob shall maintain that a theatre is a nuisance, and shall destroy it; another shall make an assault on an abolition hall; another shall maintain that slavery is an evil, and pour the fury of an excited mob against the dwellings of those who hold others in bondage; another shall deem a church, a college, a bank a nuisance—and all with the same disregard of law. Who then is safe for a moment? What interest can be secure when such sentiments are avowed, or connived at, or treated with any thing but decided abhorrence by the intelligent and virtuous portion of the community?

The world saw long since, a melancholy illustration of the tendency of the sentiment that there are evils which cannot be restrained by law, and that summary justice must be taken into the hands of the people. There was one arraigned on a charge of blasphemy. The forms of law had been gone through with. With all power in his hand, he had yet thrown himself on the protection of the laws of the land. "I find no fault at all in this man," was the deliberate sentence of the judge. The law was clearly in his favor, and the public officer declared his acquittal. But that law and its solemn decision were disregarded. "Crucify him; crucify him," was the cry of the excited and infuriated mob. He had offended the nation. He had advanced sentiments which they disapproved; and though the law was clearly in his favor, and the sentence of acquittal unambiguous, yet the passions of a capricious and tumultuous people were excited, and nothing would appease them but his blood. God's everlasting and holy Son, acquitted by law, under the permission and by the connivance of a magistrate too weak and flexible to maintain the stern interests of justice, expired under the guidance of an infuriated mob, on a cross!

II. Our second inquiry is, in what way may the supremacy of the laws be secured and maintained? What is needful in this community in order that this great object may be obtained? We have no

large standing armies to enforce obedience to the laws, and we can have none consistently with the safety of the republic. All our institutions depend on the prevalence of a correct and enlightened public sentiment; and the answer to the questions which have now been proposed, will depend on the answer to the question, in what way can a correct public sentiment be formed and maintained, and the virtue of the people be secured? In order to the accomplishment of this object, I would mention the following things as indispensable:—

1. The influence and prevalence of the principles of the Christian religion. I mean by this, not that it should be taken under the patronage of the state, but that it should pervade and influence the public mind. In other words, the prevalence of Christianity would secure obedience to the laws, and make public order and virtue certain and secure.

Let the sentiments of our text, and the other precepts of the New Testament on the subject of subjection to the civil magistrate, become the prevalent sentiments of the community, and tumult, disorder, and riot will be at an end. Every man who is brought under the influence of the Christian religion, is a man who believes that civil government is an ordinance of God; that the laws are to be obeyed; and he submits to the laws, not by constraint, not because he believes it to be a matter of human prudence, or a compact merely, but because it is the appointment of God. It becomes a part of his religion; and the highest of all sanctions—that of religion—is brought to bind him to yield obedience to the laws of his country.

Christianity prompts men to concede to others the exercise of their rights. It yields to them the right of discussing and examining all subjects freely and without annoyance. The right of every man to pursue his own plans, if he does not interfere with the public welfare; to express his opinions when and where he pleases; to carry his investigations into any regions of inquiry, unfettered and unannoyed, is a right which Christianity every where concedes to man. Every man has invaluable rights which he is at liberty to exercise, and which no other man is at liberty to disturb or annoy; and this right is every where conceded where Christianity exerts an influence over men.

Accordingly, a single glance at the facts in the case, would convince any one of the value of Christianity in securing the supremacy of the laws. Who have composed the mobs of this land? That in one or two instances professors of religion, and even officers of churches, have been concerned in mock trials, and in sentencing men to punishment without regard to the laws, I admit with shame and with deep humiliation. But such has not been the character of the mobs in general in this land. Go through them, and you would search in vain, it may be confidently affirmed, for a single professor of religion—much more for one who gave evidence that he was the true friend of Jesus Christ. The friends of the Redeemer every

where are the friends of order and virtue, and of public and private rights, and of the observance and execution of the laws.

Their sentiments on this subject have been put to the test, and are well known. More than any other class of men, Christians have been subjected to the operation of unjust and cruel laws. Early the power of the state was brought to crush their religion; and early the question was agitated, whether they should, or should not, submit to the regular operation of the laws of the land. Their course is well known; their sentiments are recorded. The example of the Redeemer, their great model, stands foremost and prominent. He had been unjustly condemned. The law was in his favor, and the actual sentence of the civil magistrate was on his side. Yet, at the solicitation of a mob, he was condemned to die; and to the sentence of the magistrate, though known to be unjust, he submitted without a murmur, and was led as a lamb to the slaughter. So Paul—"If I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die." Acts xxvii. And so profound was his deference to the laws; so deeply impressed with the importance of acknowledging the civil authority, that even when Nero was on the throne, he carried his own cause to the imperial tribunal, and resolved to abide the issue of a trial there. "I stand," says he, "at Cæsar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged." Acts xxv. 10. And we may appeal to the whole history of the apostles, persecuted and opposed as they were. When did they organize an opposition to the regular operation of the laws? When were they found among the disturbers of the public peace? When did they band themselves and their followers together to resist the regular operation of public tribunals? So of the martyrs and confessors in all ages. Calmly and quietly they went with the spirit of their Master to the rack or the stake, submitting to the laws of the land where they lived. It was only in cases where conscience forbade their compliance that they ever refused, and *then* they offered no disturbance, but chose calmly and peacefully to die. So died Ignatius, Polycarp, Ridley, Cranmer, and Latimer. They formed no organized bands to oppose the laws. They never attempted to wrest the sword from the hand of the magistrate. They excited no infuriated populace to rescue them and destroy the property or the lives of their persecutors and oppressors.

And my remark now is, that if the laws are to be obeyed in this community, the mild and peaceful influence of religion must spread over the land. Religion would prevent any tumultuous assemblage; would produce a sacred regard for the rights of all; and would secure what no arm of the magistrate, and no bayonets, and no vigilant police can do—universal order, industry, temperance, peace; the universal fear of God, and a sacred regard every where for the rights of man.

2. Allied to this, I mention secondly, as indispensable to the supremacy of the laws, the success of the temperance reformation. No

mob is raised, probably, except under the influence of exciting drinks. No infuriated, frenzied mass of mind can be urged on to deeds of desperation and blood except in connexion with, and under the influence of ardent spirits. Tumults, and riots, and scenes of lawless disorder commence usually near the low tavern and the dram shop. Masses of excited and enraged mind become consolidated and reckless commonly under the influence of this poison. In the riot at Alton, the mob *prepared* themselves for the work of blood in which they were about to engage at a tavern in the city, and repeatedly repaired there during the disgraceful scenes of that night, in order to renew their zeal and fire their ardor, and "screw their courage to the sticking point." Had there been no tavern there; had it been impossible to have obtained the poison, there is every reason to suppose that the nation would have been spared the disgraceful scenes of that ill-fated night. And if this nation were to become universally temperate; if the designs of the temperance reformation are ever carried out; if every dram shop shall be closed, and the state shall cease to lend its patronage to the vending of the liquid fire; if every man becomes a sober and a temperate man, we might safely guarantee the universal execution of the laws; nay, we might almost disband the criminal courts in the land. Be it remembered, that near nine tenths of the cases of infractions of the laws, of the assaults, and the arsons, and the broils, and the murders, are wholly under the influence of intoxicating drinks. Nine tenths of the taxes which we pay for the support of justice originate from the fact that the state, under its high sanction, and for a *price*, causes these fountains of poison to be opened at every corner of the street, and has ten thousand agents employed in making paupers and criminals, and in maintaining riot and disorder throughout the land.

3. In order to secure the supremacy of the laws, the sentiments of the virtuous and upright part of the community must be right on this subject. Disorder and tumult and mobs and murder must not be apologized for, or condemned with faint voice. On this point there must be but one mode of speaking—but one manner of feeling. There must be no language in regard to that which is supposed to be an outrage on public sentiment which shall excite a mob. No one, I think, can doubt that the mobs in this land have been encouraged or caused by the tameness of the sentiments in the community in regard to them; by the want of prompt and decided indignation from every quarter; and by opinions and expressions favorable to them from sources of influence and power. Respectable citizens, and the conductors of the press have, in some instances, spoken of movements before the public in just such a manner as to encourage the disregarders of the laws, and when the outrage has been committed, the language of condemnation has been feeble, and has soon died away. Extensively in the community there has been the impression

produced that there *are* offences which deserve the interposition of a mob; and a strain of remark has been indulged in just fitted to urge on a lawless multitude to scenes of disorder and of blood.

Now what is needful—what MUST BE—in this land, every where, is, that there should be the language of unqualified condemnation of such infraction of the laws. From the pulpit, the press, and from every place of influence, there must be heard but one voice. There must be no apology; no time-serving; no equivocal tone. All must be decided, consistent, firm—or our liberty is gone.

Men may differ in opinion—and they cannot be prevented from differing in opinion except by the influence of argument and truth—on the questions whether it is prudent or proper for a man to establish a press or a nunnery in a particular place; whether a minister of the gospel should be found with arms in his hands in defence of his property; whether slavery is an institution patronized by the Bible, and consistent with the rights of men; whether the schemes of the colonizationists are or are not wise; whether the plans and aims of anti-slavery men are or are not well laid and consistent with the laws of the land; whether it is or is not expedient and proper for females to discuss in public great and vital questions; whether it is best for individuals of different colors to form compacts and friendships; but on the question whether it is right for a lawless mob to hang men, without judge or jury; to burn a dwelling; or to imbrue their hands in the blood of a minister of the gospel, or of any other citizen, there is to be no ambiguity, no trimming, no difference of sentiment, no "uncertain sound" from the pulpit or the press, or in the conversation of the citizens of this community. Let us discuss these other matters coolly and calmly. Let us appeal to reason, and conscience, and a sense of propriety, and the law of God. Let us take all the time that is needful to settle them; and let us on all these points follow where truth shall guide us. But let us in no case, and on neither side, call in the aid of an excited mob. Let us throw out no insinuation that we need their assistance. Let us not provoke them to deeds of violence; and if they do outrage the laws, and trample down the rights of men, let us lay aside all other matters of debate for the time being, and join in one note of loud, long, and united indignation, that shall be heard throughout the length and the breadth of the land. Here we may be united. Here we have common cause. Here common interests are at stake. And here we *must* be united, or we shall soon bid farewell to all that is dear in the honored name of liberty.

4. There must be a magistracy that is unshrinking in the execution of the laws. A decided and determined magistracy when the spirit of mobs first commenced, would have prevented every subsequent outrage. Let a magistrate, like Pontius Pilate, yield to the demands of an excited and infuriated multitude; let him see one whom

the laws should protect dragged to death; let him see blood poured out like water, without the proper attempt to preserve it, and who can be ignorant of what the result will be? O, had Pilate possessed the spirit of Brutus and of Cato, how different had been the scene in Jerusalem. *Fiat justitia, ruat cœlum*, was the stern maxim of Roman jurisprudence; but this maxim had no home in the bosom of Pilate. Has it any home in the bosoms of the defenders of the laws in this land? When a magistrate is imbecile or inactive; when he connives at public tumult and disorder; when apprized of threatening danger to property or life he makes no preparation to maintain the supremacy of law; or when he coolly looks on, or the citizens look on, and they have no power or no will to prevent the disgraceful scene; who can be ignorant what scenes are yet to follow? Cut off from the protection of his country, to whom shall a man or a society of men appeal in defence of their rights? Government is at an end, and law is at an end, and but one more step is necessary to complete the ruin of the nation. Let some Cataline call around him the dissipated and lawless spirits of the land; let him collect from every dram shop, and every abode of idleness and of guilt, those who feel that all men who hold property are violating *their* rights; let him inculcate the doctrine that all banks, and charters, and churches, and Legislatures, and courts are an invasion of *their* liberty; let him teach the precious maxim of modern infidelity that all property is to be common and all institutions levelled; and the brilliant career of our Republic will soon be closed by the darkest despotism that has ever tyrannized over mankind. And unless in this nation there is moral strength enough to preserve the supremacy of the laws; unless there ARE MAGISTRATES WHO WILL LAY DOWN THEIR LIVES rather than see the property and rights of their fellowcitizens destroyed by a lawless mob; and unless there is principle enough in the community to sustain them in the enforcement of the laws, we have already come to the crisis of our destiny and the end of our liberties.

5. Finally, in order to the supremacy of the laws, and preservation of order and peace, the right of free discussion must be conceded. It cannot be denied by any class of men that no small part of the disorder and disturbance of the public peace which has occurred has arisen from unwillingness to admit this right, and has been designed to suppress it. It has been because there are certain topics which it has been supposed are not to be brought into public debate, or subjected to public inquiry; and the effort has been made to shield those points from public examination.

Now there is no time to go into an investigation of this subject, or to institute the inquiry by what limits that right is to be bounded. We may remark in general, however, that all our institutions are based on the right of free discussion. It is assumed in this country that all subjects may be examined. We have no liberty that

does not suppose this. Herein is our warfare with the tyrants of the old world; herein is our contest with those thrones of despotism which have so long tyrannized over man; herein is the reason why monarchs turn pale in their palaces and tremble on their seats of power; herein is the contest of the Protestant religion with the Papacy; herein is the struggle between freedom and arbitrary power. We owe our present elevation to this freedom of discussion more than to any thing else. It is because mind has met mind, and thought conflicted with thought; and because there has been a healthful agitation of public opinion—an agitation, compared with the leaden slumbers of other nations, like the healthful motion of the waters of the mighty deep compared with the stillness of the stagnant pool—it is to this that we owe all that is great and valuable in our nation. It is because it has been hitherto a maxim in the Republic that there was *no* topic which might not be subjected to the most free inquiry; no point in politics, in morals, in science or in religion which might not be canvassed most freely by any press or by any man, in any primary assembly or in any legislative hall, it is owing to this that we are now a nation of freemen. Our countrymen have had no other idea of liberty. No matter from what quarter or by what means any sentiment is advanced; every American has believed that he has a perfect right to examine it, and to embrace or reject it, as he pleases, or to express his sentiments in regard to it in any proper place or to any class of men. It is THE right on which all our institutions depend. The extraordinary doctrine which has been recently advanced that there are *some* points which must never be subjected to free discussion; the little sensibility which has been felt in regard to the claim; and the measures which have been adopted to defend it, and the sympathy which those measures have met, has done more to alarm the true friends of liberty in this land than all that has ever happened from the efforts of foreigners, or all the dangers that have ever threatened us from abroad. We need not fear foreign armies. We have measured strength with them and our swords have met theirs in deadly strife; and we have settled the point that our liberties are safe from any foreign invasion. We need not dread their fleets for we can build a navy like theirs, and can, if necessary, meet the mistress of the ocean "on the mountain wave." But how shall we meet this subtle enemy? How if one half of the nation shall refuse to their brethren the right of the fullest enquiry into all that pertains to the national morals, liberty, character, welfare? The pulse of freedom beats languid when this right is denied; it sends vigorous tides of life and health only when it is conceded that every thing may be investigated freely. No matter to what subject the point relates. The moment the principle is conceded that there is one point that may not be examined, that moment our liberty ceases. As long as it is held that there is one principle in science or in re-

ligion; one doctrine of government or one maxim of law that may not be examined; that there is one tribunal, be it the Inquisition or the Star chamber, that may not be examined; one custom or opinion that may not be tested by reason or the Bible; that moment our liberty is at an end. A wedge is entered that may be driven, and that will be driven, until the whole fabric of civil and religious freedom is riven asunder and is demolished. That moment we become a different people from those who landed on the rock at Plymouth, and those who planned and achieved our liberty. That moment the dark shade of despotic power begins to stretch itself over our fair land. The shadows of death will spread all along our hills and vales; and our country be destined to sink in the horrors of a long night of ages.

This right of free discussion is not to be denied. It is to be conceded that all things pertaining to the public welfare may be examined. There is to be no disturbance; no interruption; no intimidation; there must be no stripes; no burning; no murdering for the most free and full exercise of this right. Argument is to be met by argument and not by the fire-brand; principles are to be settled most freely by discussion, and not by a rifle or a dirk; thought is to be met with thought, and not by the cries of an infuriated and intoxicated multitude. What argument cannot put down must stand; and what can be met by no other weapons than the fire-brand or the rifle must endure as long as the everlasting hills.—Every man, therefore, who can contribute in the least degree to the defence and illustration of this right confers an invaluable service on his country, on human nature, and on the world. When his name shall have been forgotten, the principles which his feeble powers have contributed to defend shall live in the augmenting happiness of mankind; in the elevation of human nature to its highest dignity; in the liberal arts, the sciences, the literature of future ages; in all the departments of state, in the supremacy of just and equal laws, and in the universal glory of the church of Christ on earth. Be it ours to defend this right, and to help to transmit it unsullied to future times. By all the powers of argument it is to be defended; by all the tenderness of persuasion; by all the firmness of Christian principle and lofty patriotism; by every man who loves his country or the church; by the pen, the press; in the pulpit, in the legislative hall; by the fire-side, and in the seminary of learning. Thus only when this right is always and every where conceded will the supremacy of the laws be maintained; thus only can we look for the wide prevalence of Christian and virtuous liberty and for the universal reign of truth. Christians and fellow-citizens, let there be one community on earth which shall assert and maintain the omnipotence and the supremacy of law; one country where the capricious will of a despot, be it of an individual or a mob, shall never be allowed to reign.

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SERMON CCLIII.

Preached at the Funeral of a young Lady.

BY REV. TRYON EDWARDS.

Rochester, N. Y.

MONITIONS OF THE JUDGMENT.

2 Cor., v. 10.—*We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*

The text is one of many passages in the word of God, in which the great truths concerning immortality are "brought to light"—made plain to all. In it we are taught four things;—that there is to be a future state of rewards and punishments—that before entering upon that state, we must all be judged—that the judge will be the Lord Jesus Christ, and that after being judged each one of us will receive our final allotments according to our deeds done here on earth. These are the points to the illustration of which your attention is invited. And here let imagination be silent, and let us hear in reverent solemnity only the simple truth of God.

I. There will certainly be a future state of rewards and punishments. This is evident,

From the light of nature.—Reason teaches us that God is a righteous moral governor—that he loves virtue, and will reward it, and that he hates evil, and will punish it—and each in exact proportion to its merit or desert. This, however, we know he does not do in this world. Here "all things come alike to all—there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked,"—often do we find the good in adversity, while the evil are prosperous—"the just man perishing in his righteousness, and the wicked prolonging his life in his wickedness"—a Dives feasting in his purple, and a Lazarus

diseased and starving at his gate—a Herod on the throne, and a Paul in the dungeon. These things being so, then, as even the Pagans could reason, if there *be* a God, there must be a future state where his justice shall be made manifest to all—where all the obliquities of this life shall be rectified—its seeming confusion changed to order—its virtues be rewarded, and its sins be punished. Reason further shows us, that man, while on earth, never attains the full perfection of his being, and thus seems to point us to a future state, where he is designed to advance forever, and where it will be from his own folly—his own fault, if he does not grow to an angel's stature in all that is the glory of his nature. Reason also points us to our dread of annihilation, and to our strong desire—our gasping thirst for immortality—to that rising and swelling of the spirit which is so often seen at the bed of death, when the soul, as with the dying Payson, rises to "an angel's energy, and somewhat of an angel's feeling too"—exulting in the prospect of an hereafter, and almost seeming *to grasp* its tangible realities. All these arguments, however, except the first, are, I grant, only sources of strong presumption; for,

The doctrine before us is peculiarly a doctrine of revelation.—Reason may dispel much of the darkness that gathers around the grave, but it requires the power of revelation entirely to banish that darkness. In the book of God, however, "life and immortality" are literally "brought to light"—i. e. they are made perfectly plain. The light of heaven is poured in its focal brightness upon them, and like some dark object when placed in a flood of sunbeams, what was before obscure, is now so plain that none can fail to see it with absolute clearness. Here we are not only assured that there will be a future state, but its nature also is fully revealed. We *hear* "the voice of the archangel and the trump of God." We *see* the heavings of the resurrection opening every grave, and the deep with convulsive throes giving up its dead, and all the dead, small and great, standing before God. We see the world in flames, and the heavens departing as a scroll, and the universe assembled together. We see the Judge come forth, and the books are opened before us, and we hear the sounds, "Well done," and "Depart," thrilling our inmost hearts with all their indications of joy and wo! And hardly do the echoes of the judgment die away upon our hearing, when we see mortality swallowed up, either in life or death eternal. Heaven is unfolded to our view, and we see its freedom from sin, its positive perfection, its white robes, its glorious crowns, and its endless joys. We hear its rapturous harps, celebrating the praises of Jesus, and a voice comes forth to our ears, saying, There is no more death, or

pain, neither sorrow nor crying, and that all tears are forever wiped away. Hell, too, is bared to our trembling gaze, with its endless flames—its never-dying worm—its darkness—its self-contempt—its bereavements, and its hopeless despair. We hear its lamentations and voices of anguish ; and as we ask, "Are they forever?" we shudder at the dismal response which is echoed back, "Forever !" Thus in revelation we are not only informed that there *is* a future state, but *what* it is, and what are its different allotments, that we may know what we have to hope for, or what we have to dread, and that one of these portions must be ours. Before we can enter upon either of these final states, however, it is true,

II. THAT WE MUST ALL BE JUDGED. This, also, we are taught by the word of God. There we are expressly informed that God "hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness"—that "every one of us shall give account of himself to God"—that "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil"—and that "he shall reward every man according to his works." This judgment will be *future*—"we must appear," not *now*, but *hereafter ; retributive*—"that every one may *receive according to that he hath done ;*" *inevitable*—"we *must* appear ;" *universal*—"we must *all* appear ;" and yet *personal*—for "every one shall give account of *himself*," and shall "receive according to that *he* hath done." Whether there will be a specific judgment, in the case of each individual, as he leaves this world, is a question not fully settled. But, however that may be, we are plainly pointed to an hour when the whole universe shall be assembled before the throne, at the voice of the archangel, and the summons of the trump of God. Then shall that which is covered be made manifest, and that which is hid be revealed. The wicked shall be condemned according to their sinfulness, and the righteous be rewarded according to their good deeds—not indeed as the *meritorious* ground of their reward, but as the evidence of that faith by which they are justified, and thus entitled to receive it. Then shall God's justice and his grace shine forth in equal splendor. The impenitent shall go away to everlasting death, while the humble believer is raised to endless life and glory—to joys which eye hath not seen, or ear heard, and the heart of man fails to conceive.

III. THE JUDGE WHO IS TO DECIDE ALL THIS WILL BE THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of *Christ*." By him the world was created, and is now upheld and governed. Through him was redemption provided for its dying millions, and by him will they at last be judged, and their destinies for eternity decided, according to their reception or rejection of his

grace. And in this arrangement there is an evident—a peculiar fitness. Christ, as we have seen, is our immediate moral governor—ever present with us, inspecting all our conduct. And not only does he search our hearts, by virtue of his omniscience, but from his own experience *as a man*, he knows our strength, our temptations, and our infirmities—what allowance is to be made for our weakness, and what severity is deserved by our guilt—where to sympathize, and where to blame—where to pity, and where to forgive. He is abundant, too, in tender mercy—not merely from the infinite compassion of his own nature, but from his relation of brotherhood to us, and therefore we may know that while he is just to punish, he is also disposed to spare—earnest to save. But we are further taught, that in the results of the judgment,

IV. EVERY ONE OF US SHALL BE REWARDED OR PUNISHED ACCORDING TO OUR WORKS. Every one of us shall "receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done." There shall we stand before an omniscient Judge—his eyes, like a living fiery consciousness, searching our hearts, and bringing to light every evil thought, word and deed. All our neglect of God—of his Son—of his Spirit—of his worship, in the sanctuary, in the family, in the closet; all our transgressions against man—our dishonesty, or overreaching, or oppression, or injustice; all our evil thoughts against the Divine government, or character, or providence—all our unbelief and inward rebellions; every idle, or profane, or false, or slanderous, or unkind word; all broken vows, and violated promises, and equivocating deceits; every unholy practice—every cherished iniquity—every neglected duty—every stifling of concience—every rejection of the Spirit—every worshipped idol—every wasted Sabbath—every unheeded warning—every perverted truth—every abused mercy; these—all these, like so many angels of darkness, shall appear in judgment against us—each testifying to our guilt—each adding to the weight of endless condemnation, ready to descend upon our unshielded and defenceless heads. And if, in that hour, we have no refuge—no safety in Jesus Christ, that weight *will* descend upon us, and beneath its intolerable burden we must sink forever!

Thus have we seen the reality—the certainty of a future judgment; and that from *reason*, which argues it from God's justice as a moral governor—from man's imperfection while here on earth—from his instinctive dread of annihilation, and from his eager longings for immortality; and especially from *revelation*, which asserts the doctrine in the most explicit terms. We have also seen that before entering upon the æternal state we must all be judged—that our

judge will be the Lord Jesus Christ, and that by him we shall be rewarded or punished, every one of us according to the deeds done on earth.

In view of this subject, we cannot but exclaim,

1. *What a scene will be unfolded at the day of judgment.* Could I take you, my hearer, to some elevated station, and by a word uncover some large city to your view—could I expose to your gaze the naked character, the true condition of every one of its inhabitants—could I show you the covered sins, the secret envies, the bitter hatreds, the stinging slanders, the abused confidence, the false friendships, the loathsome indulgence, the hidden cunnings, the corroding selfishness, the cherished villanies, which are living, and rankling, and festering on every side—could I show you the brother hating brother, the guardian defrauding his ward, the friend betraying his friend—in short, could I tear off the masks in which so many of mankind are walking, and show them all to you, just as they *really are*, you can conceive the amazement that would seize your spirit! Extend this thought, this fearful vision, from a city to a county, from a county to a state, from a state to a nation, from a nation to a world, from a world to a universe, and you will have some faint conception of the amazing terrors of the final day. The sounding trump, the dissolving elements, the rending rocks, the flaming earth, the flying heavens, these are but trifles, compared with the sinner's heart, with all its countless sins uncovered and exposed—a fearful spectacle, to the gaze of the universe, to the eye of God! These it is, the sight of which will make the very soul turn pale, which will fill it with guilty tremblings and quaking fears. These are the horrors of the judgment!

In view of our subject, we may again remark,

2. *That the Bible's revelation of a future state is a strong evidence of the Bible's truth.* It is probably true that unaided reason could never have satisfied herself, with *absolute certainty*, of either the reality or the nature of a future state. But when once that reality and nature have been revealed, she sees at a glance that they are reasonable and proper; and in their reasonableness and fitness she perceives a clear proof of the truth of the revelation which makes them known. When, at any time, an enigma has been proposed for your solution, you have often reflected, and thought, and groped in vain for its answer, and finally perhaps have given it up in despair. When, however, the answer is mentioned, you perceive in an instant that it is the *true* answer, because it, and *only* it, completely solves the question before you. And so it is with a future state. Had not revelation aided reason, we might have groped on forever without any absolute assurance respecting it. But when

once its reality and nature are revealed to us, so completely does that revelation chime in with our feelings and our reason, and our sense of moral fitness, *that we know it must be true.*

3. *How great a privilege it is that we enjoy a revelation from God.* Were we obliged to wander in some dark cavern of the earth, where pitfalls were gaping beneath us, and death was yawning on every side, how should we prize the light which should reveal our danger and thus enable us to avoid it! We *are* in such a cavern—it is our state of probation; and the Bible is the light which discloses the future, and shows us how to avoid its evils and secure its blessings, both for this world and that which is to come. Where the heathen were in utter midnight, and the Old Testament saints in comparative darkness, we enjoy the broad light of heaven. If those heathen were guilty for their neglect of God, how deep will be our condemnation if we fail to improve to our repentance and faith, the light with which we are favored; and if the patriarchs could make such progress as many of them did in holiness, how ought we to mount up on wings as eagles—ever to be advancing in the divine life. Again we may learn from this subject

4. *How to estimate happiness.* Its true test is the judgment-seat of Christ. Take all the mere worldly happiness which can be gathered, and if we have no other source of joy, what is it, what can it be to us? It is but a vapor, a flitting dream, a fading leaf, a dissolving cloud, a passing wave, a withering flower! It is but a shadow which is soon gone, a garland that will ere long fade, a light robe, that will be devoured, like chaff, by the last day's flames, leaving our bereaved spirits defenceless, forlorn, friendless, forever! That only is true, substantial happiness, which, like gold from the furnace, will come forth even from *those* flames, purified and of endless brightness! That only is the abode of true happiness, where sin and sorrow can never come, where bliss is endless and without alloy, where is an Eden without a serpent, a crown without a cross, a garden without a sepulchre, a rose without a thorn! Once more, we are taught by this subject,

5. *The importance, the imperious necessity of preparing for the scenes to which it points us as so very near.* If about to journey to a distant place, you would all admit, and *feel* too, the necessity of preparing for it. How much more should you feel this necessity when the journey is to terminate, and that too very soon, in mansions of endless joy or wo! Especially let me urge this consideration upon the children and youth of this congregation, and let it be impressed upon you by the providence, which is the voice of God. Within a few days, my dear friends, one of your number has commenced, or rather

has ended this journey. Marked by peculiar loveliness, often had she mingled in your enjoyments, and joined you in your studies in yonder hall, and been beside you in the Sabbath school and the Bible class. And I have met her in the room of solemn inquiry, asking, with tearful earnestness, "What shall I do to be saved?" And often have I urged her to accept the offers of the gospel, and yield her heart to the Redeemer, that her soul might be saved. But a few days since, and her health still continued, and her prospects of life were as fair as those of any of you. And then, as in a moment, she was thrown upon the bed of wasting sickness; and when I was called to her bed-side, her reason was stupified, and death was purpling her lips and blanching her cheek; her eyes were closed from weakness, and her breath was gasping to its final flight; and soon the shroud was her garment, and the coffin her bed, and she was senseless to the flowing tears, and the sobbing grief, and the breaking hearts of parents, and kindred, and friends. But a few days since, she was with you, and to-day the sun is shining upon her grave, and her deathless soul is in the world of spirits!

And now I ask you, my dear friends, are you prepared for that dying chamber, and that winding sheet, and that final hour? Ye who were companions of the departed, are you prepared to be seized as in a moment, and borne away to the sepulchre?—to follow her as suddenly as she was called, to the judgment, to the unseen world? I come to you with a message from God, entreating you, by this affecting call of his providence, that you prepare to meet him. "*To the judgment!—to the judgment!*" is echoed to you from the grave of your companion, by the voice of conscience, by the strivings of the Spirit, by the word of God. To the judgment—to the judgment, you are passing as on the wings of the wind, as the arrow through the air, as the lightning through the clouds! Be wise and prepare for it, lest you be miserable forever. *Prepare for it*, and thus be fitted for a happy life, a blissful death, and a glorious immortality. Prepare for it *now*, while health continues; *for a dying hour is the most wretched of all moments in which to prepare for heaven!* I repeat it, and I bring the warning from yonder chamber of the dying—would that I could impress it forever upon every heart—A DYING HOUR IS THE MOST WRETCHED OF ALL MOMENTS IN WHICH TO PREPARE FOR HEAVEN!

Stereotyped by F. F. Ripley,
New York.

SERMON CCLIV.

BY REV. TRYON EDWARDS.

THE SINNER'S CHARACTER, COURSE, AND END.

PHIL., iii. 18, 19.—*Of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ;—whose end is destruction—whose God is their belly—and whose glory is in their shame—who mind earthly things.*

THERE is no inconsistency between high attainments, or strength of mind, and deep emotion of heart—between the most exalted greatness, and the truest tenderness of feeling. Xerxes could shed tears to think, that of all the millions whom he commanded, in a few short years not one would remain. Cicero and Demosthenes, in their respective banishments, often wept at the thought of their ungrateful but beloved countries. Cæsar did the same when he beheld the fate of his dreaded but respected rival. And even the stern Napoleon shed tears when thinking of the thousands whom he had led on to be frozen, and starved, and slaughtered, and burned, amid the frosts, and famine, and conflicts, and flames of the memorable Russian campaign. Now in all these cases, there was nothing of weakness—nothing unmanly in tears. On the contrary, they sprang from principles, or feelings, or sentiments, which, if not perverted, are some of the noblest of our nature—from the same magnanimity and greatness of soul which is capable of projecting the loftiest plans, and of securing the noblest and best results. It is no mark of weakness to weep—no mark of manliness to be unmoved when every thing appeals to our hearts—when the occasion might almost melt tears from the solid rock.

These remarks are true of all, but peculiarly of the characters of sacred history. When Joseph wept at the sight of his long lost brother, and at the story of his aged father's sufferings—when the noble-hearted but impetuous Peter wept in bitterness at the remembrance of his denial of his Lord—when Jesus, in his character of a man and a prophet, shed tears at Lazarus' grave, or poured forth floods of grief over the devoted city of Jerusalem—their tears not only excite our

sympathy, but they demand, and they receive too, our unqualified respect.

And so in reference to our text. When Paul weeps, it is not from weakness—it is not without the most abundant reason. Though by nature a man of mighty mind, and arduous enterprise, and tireless energy of purpose, still, when the immortal soul was full in his view—when he thought of the sinfulness of its course, and the fearfulness of its prospect if unconverted—when he saw the unspeakable glory to which it might rise, or the endless wo to which it might sink—when he remembered, too, that all was to be won or lost in the fleeting moment of life, then indeed he could feel, and feeling he could weep, and act, and preach, and pray, with the utmost tenderness and faithfulness, for the salvation of men.

It seems to have been with such feelings that he uttered the words of our text. He had just been urging the Phillipian Christians to walk worthy of their vocation. And then, as if his soul were burdened with the condition of the impenitent, he adds that *some* walk, not as he would have them walk—"of whom," says he, "I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ;—whose end is destruction—whose God is their belly—whose glory is in their shame—who mind earthly things."

These words were originally spoken of those of an ancient city—of those who have long since gone to the bar of God, and some of them doubtless to the woes of despair. But are they not also full of instruction to us? If the apostle were to-day to stand before us, might he not point to some in this congregation, in these seats, I almost tremble to add, might he not point to some of us who this morning came around the table of Christ, whom he might class with those spoken of in the text? Yes, my hearers, there are undoubtedly some of us to whom his language might refer.

LET US INQUIRE WHO ARE THEY TO WHOM THE APOSTLE REFERS, THAT THUS WE MAY BE PREPARED TO APPRECIATE AND ENTER INTO HIS FEELINGS RESPECTING THEM.

Who then are they to whom the apostle refers? They may be known,

I. *By the disposition which they cherish towards God.* "They are the enemies of the cross of Christ." Some of you, my impenitent hearers, may perhaps deem this a severe charge,—to say that you are the enemies of God, enemies of your Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor—of the Redeemer who died that you might live. But remember that it is Jehovah's assertion, and that I am placed here by him, not to lull you to the sleep of death by prophesying smooth things, but

to tell you, in all fidelity and kindness, the plain, and simple, and pointed truth, if perhaps it may be the means of saving your souls. And now for the question,—of whom does the apostle speak? He that is not for God is against him, and of course is his enemy. If, then, my hearer, you are not *with* God's friends, if with them you do not believe in him, and love and serve him, if you are not disposed to profess his name before men, if you are not living for the advancement of his cause, then you may know that you are his enemy! This enmity will appear in your judgment, in your will, in your affections, in your practice. It will appear *in your judgment.* You will have comparatively little esteem for God. Men are ever ready to think highly of their friends, to praise their good qualities, to regard their wishes, and to conceal their defects; of their enemies, on the contrary, they will entertain a low opinion, attributing even their good traits to wrong motives, disregarding their wishes, and searching out and exposing their defects. And so with the impenitent towards God. Comparatively, they entertain low and unworthy thoughts both of his character and government. They may perhaps at times be elevated by sublime conceptions of the Godhead, and their soul may swell with the emotion, as it might at the view of the thundering cataract, or the cloud-capt mountain. But they never heartily adore him, or reverence his institutions, or obey his laws, or cherish or exhibit a tender regard to his wishes. And if they do not in the spirit of enmity search out defects in his character, that they may expose them, it is only because they know that character to be perfect: and what they cannot do in this way, they sometimes do in another, by disregarding and perhaps even sneering at religion, by making sport of serious things, and by watching for the defects and errors of God's friends, that they may hold them up to the ridicule and scorn of others. Is such an estimate of God, of his religion, and of his friends, the estimate of friendship? Do you so treat any earthly friend? Is it not rather the estimate of an opposing spirit—of enmity? Again,

This enmity appears also *in the will* of the impenitent. Their wills are directly opposed to God's will. They will those things which he hates, and he those which they hate; so long as they are unconverted, they ever oppose the will of God; chastisement fails to subdue them, mercy to win, threatenings to alarm, invitations to allure, love to melt; so obstinate and persevering is their opposition that it is never overcome but by the Holy Spirit; such is their carnal mind that they are not subject to the law of God; that they are enemies to his authority, to his actual rule, to all his wishes, so far as they clash with their own.

This enmity is further manifest *in their affections.* The unrenewed heart is not only deceitful above all things, but it is desperately wicked. As we have already said, it may have some vague respect and admiration for the exalted nature and sublimity of God's character. But it is perfectly obvious that it has no love for his moral attributes, for his holiness, no love for himself as a holy God, or for the spiritual duties of religion. Its affections fasten on forbidden objects—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. It finds no delight in communion with God, and in cherishing a devout and humble spirit. It loves the world supremely, though Christ hath said, that "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." And even if it do not, at times, like the Scribes and Pharisees, break out into open, and bitter, and malicious opposition, still its general condition, the uniform tenor of its course, is that of utter worldliness and forgetfulness of God. But the enmity of men to God is especially and constantly manifest *in their practice.* In the graphic language of the apostle, they are "enemies by wicked works." As Enoch walked with God, so they walk contrary to him—*that* is the *habit* of their lives. They do all things for self; and even they themselves will probably admit that there is not a solitary action of their lives which they are led to perform solely because God requires it, and because they think it will honor him. If they do not openly and bitterly oppose his will and all his commands, still they are *ever* doing that which they know he dislikes and forbids. By a single act of profaneness, or drunkenness, or Sabbath breaking, if unrepented of, we know that a man plainly shows himself God's enemy—a violator of his law. And does he not habitually evince that enmity by neglecting to forsake his sins, by disregarding the calls of mercy, and wasting probation, and trifling with conscience, and grieving the Holy Spirit—by *living, deliberately* living in impenitence, and thus practically despising the blood of atonement! Yes, my hearers, if there be any truth in the maxim that actions speak louder than words—that conduct is the true index of feeling, then is every one of you who is impenitent *an enemy of God!* Again, and again, and again, in the Bible, you are in so many words called his enemy, and your conscience fully sanctions the charge, for it tells you that you are not his devoted and faithful friends, and *neutral* you cannot be. You may be moral men, good members of society, respected and beloved, and deservedly so, in all the relations of life. In short, you may be of that number who may well be called *God's most respectable enemies.* But still you *are* enemies, enemies of the cross of Christ, of its self-denial, of its submission, of its holiness, of all its requirements; *enemies* of all these

until you are reconciled to God by faith in Christ. Those of whom our text speaks, may also be known,

II. *By their habitual devotedness to the world.* They "mind earthly things." They are *engrossed* with the world, with its cares, its follies, or its business; ever *bent* upon the attainment of all that the earth deems of value. The Christian's conversation is in heaven, but not so with them; *their* conversation is of the earth, earthy. The one uses, the other abuses the world. The one makes every thing subservient to growth in grace, the other, by every thing, only aggravates his own guilt. For the one, to live is Christ, for the other, to live is the world. He is called to aspire to the *honors of heaven*, honors pure and unfading; and yet he prefers the honors of the world, whose garlands, if they fade not in his grasp, will ever bring a thorn to his brow. He is urged to strive for the *riches* of heaven, riches which endure forever, and yet he is ever grasping after the riches of earth, which he may not be able to attain, and which he must soon leave by the side of his grave. He is entreated to seek the *pleasures* of heaven, satisfying and eternal as they are; and yet, with feverish thirst, he is ever eager for the pleasures of time and sense, which can never fill the soul, and which leave behind them the sting of eternal death. He is invited to the favor of the ever-living God, the greatest and the best of all beings; and yet he prefers the fleeting favor of man, whose smiles of to-day are the frowns of to-morrow; whose "hosannas" of the passing hour may be the "crucify him" of the next. In all these respects, the world is his idol. Its honors he prefers to those which come from God, its ways to the ways of holiness, its joys to those which are eternal, its applause to the favor of Christ, its riches to those of heaven, its crowns to a crown of glory. He lives here, as if the earth were his endless abode; and the language of his heart, of his life, is, that if he could have his fill of this world, and that forever, he would not wish a better heaven. He would indeed like very well to have the world here, and the *bliss* of heaven (though he cares not for its holiness) hereafter. But if he cannot have both, like the young man in the gospel, he is willing to

> "Let Christ, and heaven; and glory go,
> To make his wealth and pleasures sure."

Is this, my hearer, in any respect, the way in which you are living? If so, you are the enemy of the cross of Christ. Those of whom the apostle speaks may also be known,

III. *By the importance which they attach to the pleasures of appetite and sense.* Their "God is their belly." By this I suppose the apostle intended to assert that they deliberately and habitually

make self-indulgence, in some form, the object of their supreme attachment, of their constant pursuit. And this is the very worst form of idolatry; for the lower the objects of our practical worship, the lower are we ourselves degraded. The man who worships an idol of wood or stone is gradually sinking himself only to the stupidity of the block or the marble. But he who makes a God of his own appetites, is rapidly degrading himself to the level of the brute here, and of the fiend hereafter. And yet this is the tendency of every one who is so far forgetful of God, and of his own nobler nature, as to make self-gratification in any form the chief object of pursuit; and this not merely at the dictate of *impulse*, but on *principle*, the fixed principles of sin and death. Those of whom we speak are further designated,

IV. *By the false and flattering estimate which they form of their own course.* "Whose glory is in their shame." Not only are they opposed to that which should be their highest glory, but not unfrequently they glory even in their neglect of religion, in their sinfulness, in their very enmity to God and holy things. This glorying, in different individuals, appears under various aspects. Now it leads the sinner to regard his own course with complacency or self-gratulation. Now it searches out and proclaims the defects of professing Christians, contrasting their inconsistencies with its own fancied correctness. Now it plumes itself on its own external morality—saying with the Pharisee, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men." And now it appears in its highest, its most glaring form, exulting in its own opposition to truth and piety, shamelessly boasting of its own sinfulness, or even glorying in deeds which are enough to make angels weep and devils blush! Either in these, or in other and kindred forms, it is usually found in those of whom we speak.

Once more, those alluded to by the apostle may also be known,

V. *By the end to which they are rapidly tending.* Their "end is destruction." The career of man is ever either upward to heaven or downward to hell. There is no middle ground which he can occupy. He cannot stop at the *brute*, for he has intellect and conscience. If, therefore, he is not rising to become an angel, he *is* sinking to become a devil. And his end will be everlasting destruction from the presence of God, and the glory of his power—destruction by the just wrath of Jehovah—destruction which is hopeless and endless, "where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched."

Such are those spoken of in our text. They are the enemies of the cross of Christ—they mind earthly things—their God is their belly—they glory in their shame—and their end is destruction. Well might the apostle *weep* over such, tears of mingled compassion, and sorrow,

and grief. Well might he weep at the ingratitude of their lives, the degradation of their aims, the folly of their course, the guilt of their conduct, the mournfulness of their condition, the fearfulness of their end! He wept, and well he might; for it is a melancholy spectacle to behold a being who is the offspring of Jehovah's power, the object of his constant care, the recipient of his ceaseless mercy; to contemplate such a being, reckless of his obligations and forgetful of infinite kindness, rising up in rebellion and raising his hand against his Father in heaven; striving to dethrone God, that he may exalt self; seeking unworthy objects; glorying in his shame; and finally ending his course in remediless ruin! Yes, there is reason for tears when we ponder the sinner's course, the sinner's prospects, and the sinner's end. The maniac with a *mind* in ruins is a mournful sight; but far more so is a *heart* in ruins, with the prospect of remaining so forever! The wreck of earthly hopes is often enough to wring the heart with sorrow; but what is this to the wreck of all that is bright and glorious in the destiny of an immortal soul! Misapplied talent and disappointed affection often excite melancholy emotions; and yet what are all the wasted talents or affections of this world, to those of the world of despair! O! it is enough to make angels weep to think of all the disappointed hopes, and the blighted feelings, and the ruined prospects, and the perverted intellect, and the broken hearts of hell! To see the eye that might have sparkled with celestial brightness, gleaming forever with hopeless desperation; to hear the tongue that might have hymned the sweet anthems of the redeemed, breaking the silence of perdition only with weeping and wailing; to behold the intellect, the heart, the soul, the entire being that might have adorned the heaven of heavens, cast down to the blackness of darkness, the companion of devils and lost spirits—yes, it is enough to make angels weep—enough, I had almost said, to wake compassion in the heart of the vilest outcast in perdition. And yet, fellow-sinners, such is the end to which you are rapidly tending—the end which may soon be yours! A little while, and you will part with your present means of grace, and your probation and your hopes will end together. And can you bear to go up to the judgment with your present character, there to stand before that God who is your enemy? Can you bear to meet the Judge's brow of burning indignation, or to hear your sentence of endless anguish?—to part forever from Christian friends—the loved ones of earth—you to go downward to perdition, while they go upward to heaven, and then to see the impassable gulf spreading forever between you and them, while no voice of mercy, or ray of hope, or gleam of consolation shall ever dawn upon your prison-house of wo? Tell me, dear hearer,

can you endure all this? And yet all this, and more—more than this is yours, unless you turn from your evil ways, and make God your friend. Well might the apostle weep over you, at what you are, and at what is before you. Had his head been waters, and his eyes a fountain of tears, there is no object in the universe that might with more reason exhaust that fountain, than the sight of the thoughtless, impenitent sinner, rushing on, amid all the hazards of time, to all the ruin of a lost eternity!

Reflections.

1. *This subject affords one of many answers to the complaint, sometimes made by the impenitent, of what they call the gloom of Christians.* When Hume once complained of the gloominess of many Christians whom he had known, he was told in reply by an eminent divine, that the sight of *himself* was at any time enough to make a Christian sad, and that his own infidelity was abundant cause for the sadness of those who knew him. And so, my impenitent friends, the thought of your present course of sin, and of your future prospects of wo, is enough to wake the most mournful reflections in the heart of every thinking and devoted Christian. And if you ever observe such an one sad in your presence, you may perhaps find *in yourself* the explanation of his sadness!

2. *This subject suggests a sure and searching test of Christian character.* To feel, as the apostle felt for the honor of God, and for the souls of others, is an essential trait of every real Christian. The feeling will indeed be modified in each according to the temperament of the individual; but in each it will exist, as a deep-rooted and ever active principle—flowing forth in desire, and prayer, and effort for the conversion of others. To suppose a real Christian a stranger to these feelings is a contradiction in terms. It is like supposing an affectionate child who has no regard for his father, a loyal subject who hates his sovereign. And though the professed child of God may at times feel less and do less for the salvation of others than he ought, yet just so far as he continues in this state, especially if warned of his sin and danger, just so far does he give evidence to all, that his name to live, like the epitaph on the tombstone, is but a remembrancer to all that he is dead. Christian hearers, will you apply this test in all fidelity to your present condition, and feelings, and hopes? What are you doing for the conversion of the impenitent?—for the salvation of all who are ready to perish? Nothing? Then a sigh for your hopes, and a tear for your inconsistency, and a prayer for your repentance, and a warning to your souls, is all that I have from God for you!

3. *Our subject appeals to those who are Christians, to emulate the example of the apostle.* Not only must we *feel* as he felt for the impenitent, but we must pray and act for their conversion. as he did, and that without ceasing. We have no time to waste in melancholy musings, or sentimental sadness, or useless, idle tears. There is misery—there is sin—there is danger enough demanding our instant, and ceaseless, and prayerful effort. With heaven open before us, and our neighbors and friends falling from its blissful glories—with hell yawning beneath us, and those around us plunging to its darkness and anguish, let us wake to our duty, and in the strength of God rush to their rescue, if perhaps we may snatch them as brands from the burning. Say not, with Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" In an important sense you *are* your brother's keeper, and if unfaithful to his soul, his blood may be required at your hands. To-day, at the table of Christ, you have renewedly consecrated yourself to the service of God, and the salvation of your fellow-men. Beware of unfaithfulness, lest "Judas," "Traitor," be written on your brow, and the curse of God rest upon your soul!

Once more, finally,

4. *The sinner may see in this subject, as in a glass, the picture of himself.* Before you is the plain of probation. It is filled with pitfalls, and snares, and death; and over it I see an individual thoughtlessly rushing. He is offered guidance and safety, but he refuses both. Mercy invites and wrath urges his return, but he disregards alike the melting accents of the one, and the indignant frown of the other. Before him the storm of vengeance is darkly gathering, and no rainbow of mercy sits upon its clouds; its thunders peal, and its lightnings blaze upon his path, and the smoke that rises from the blackness of darkness is full in his view, and still he presses onward. And now the wailings of despair ring upon his ear, and its lurid flames glare upon his vision, and still he presses onward—with the reckless delusion of sin, with desperate decision, with the madness of despair—as true to sin, and death, and hell, as the needle to the pole! And now the burning lake is just before him, but he stays not in his course. And now he stumbles on its very verge, and plunges to its fiery bosom, and with a single stifled groan, is lost forever! And who is that reckless, heedless, ruined mortal? Fellow-sinner, it is you! Such is *your* course—*your* folly—*your* madness—*such, I fear, will be* YOUR *end!*

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SERMON CCLV.

BY REV. ROBERT PAGE.

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THE CHARACTER AND BLESSEDNESS OF THE HUMBLE.

Isaiah lxvi. 2.—*To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.*

"Poor;" that, is *humble.* So the word is translated in several other places; and so the reason of the thing shows that it should be understood here. Does not God look to the wealthy who are of a contrite spirit, and who tremble at his word, as really as to the poor? What is there in the context to show that the prophet is pointing out a distinction in the *external condition* of men? Is it not *character* only which he is describing? And did not God look,—look with favor, for that is the meaning here,—to David, when he was of that contrite spirit which dictated the 51st psalm? And was he poor, literally? Was he not a king, and immensely rich?

"Poor," in the text, must then mean "poor in spirit," as is he whom Christ, in his sermon on the mount, pronounces "blessed."

"And of a contrite spirit." "Contrite;" smitten,—*wounded*, literally, contrite in spirit,—smitten, wounded *in heart*:—broken-hearted: that is, deeply affected with a sense of sin—penitent. It is such a feeling as David had after Nathan reproved him: such as the woman who washed the Saviour's feet with tears had: such as the publican had: such as Peter had when he "went out and wept bitterly."

Who "trembleth at my word;"—not only feareth greatly the judg-

ments which God threatens, but reverenceth his word, and is unwilling to disobey it, and heartily desirous to keep it.

To such a man God "will look." He will fix his eye upon him, and not "hide his face" from him, as he does from those he hates, and intends to punish. To such a man he will look, as an object of delight. To him he will look, as *men* love to look to objects and scenes which are beautiful, though with infinitely more delight and love. Here then we have,

THE CHARACTER AND BLESSEDNESS OF THE HUMBLE AND PENITENT MAN.

I. What then is that humility, and that penitence, spoken of in the text?

This trait of character does not consist in *meanness of exterior.*—A miserable hut, coarse and tattered garments, and other things in like style, may be the consequences of a man's idleness and vice. Or he may choose them, from mere love of singularity, or for the reputation of humility. Or they may come of unavoidable poverty. In such cases they are either badges of his pride, or, at best, no distinctive signs of character at all. He must be but little acquainted with the world who does not know that sackcloth and rags may cover a proud man, as well as purple and gems.

Nor is this trait of character the same as *bashfulness* or *diffidence.* This may be mere confusion produced by conscious guilt, or by want of acquaintance with the world, or by a fear of showing some defect of body or mind. Or it may be device to obtain praise. Here, mere men are all one thinks of. God, and sin against God, are out of view.

It is not the same as *tameness of spirit.* The man who has it may firmly claim his rights, and not suffer himself to be meanly trampled on. He may be conscious that, as a man, he is on a level with other men: that he, as they, has a rational and moral nature, and a right to promote his own good, and seek his own happiness. And he may act according to this view of himself, and of his rights. He may judge for himself as to what he shall believe and do,—he may speak for himself, and act for himself. He may show, indeed, great respect and deference to others. He may get all the light and knowledge from them which they are capable of giving. To them, in all their rightful authority, he may cheerfully submit. But he may not receive their opinions on trust, or servilely crouch to them, in all their self-assumed authority, and all their unlawful oppressions, as one who belongs to an inferior order of creatures.—He may claim

and retain his station and his office, as a teacher, a guardian, a parent, a magistrate, a pastor.

This humility is not inconsistent with *enterprise* and noble aspiring. The man who has it, conscious of his own powers, and understanding what he can do, with the blessing of God, may devise and attempt great things. He may plan great improvements in his department of business. He may thirst for knowledge, and may apply all his powers of mind to grasp the principles of science, and accumulate stores of knowledge.—Especially, he may thirst for spiritual knowledge, and knowledge on all points connected with religion;—he may study and search the Scriptures, and look to God by prayer, day and night. Thus he may press on to know God, may hold delightful intercourse with the loftiest intellects, and may stand on the very pinnacle of greatness and elevation.

And again; as to active labor, he may have great enterprise in doing good. His benevolent desires may embrace the whole world; and he may devise for the entire regeneration and happiness and glory of the millions who tread upon its surface. And, to this end, he may deny himself, and labor with the utmost vigor of which man is capable. In this enterprise of doing good, he may trample beneath him all selfishness, meanness, littleness of mind, and may secure, by universal consent, a character for true magnanimity.

Once more: this trait of character does not consist in *confessions*, or similar *outward show*, of any kind.—A man may confess that he is unworthy—that he is a sinner—and that he is a *great* sinner: he may do it with many words, and the strongest terms in the language: and he may in his tones of voice, in his features, his gestures, and his whole manner show the same self-abasement: and he may do all this publicly;—yet the whole may be mere "voluntary humility." He may do it for praise; or he may be forced to do it by circumstances, to hold any thing of tolerable standing among the pious;—or it may be merely from the pressure of conscience; or divine judgments, felt or feared, may drive him to this course. His heart may still be proud and hard, though his head be "bowed down like a bulrush."

In illustration of the remarks made above, I could point you to examples of both proud and humble men, mentioned in the Scriptures. Proud and hard-hearted Pharaoh made confessions of his sins. And wicked Ahab put on all the appearance of humiliation and self-abasement. On the other hand, look to Abraham, Moses, David, Job, Isaiah, and Daniel. Here you have specimens, in very humble men, of great nobleness of mind. Look especially to Paul. Who, of all the race of man, more humble and penitent than he? Yet who ever

had more manliness, boldness, self-respect, courage, enterprise, magnanimity?

What then is that trait of character mentioned in the text?

A deep, a heart-felt sense of littleness and sin in the sight of God. The man who has it takes a right *standard* of character: not any of those false standards which the world set up. His eye is fixed on God. He has looked at his eternal self-existence, his infinite knowledge and power, his omnipresence, his supreme authority and dominion over the universe. He has looked at his truth and faithfulness, his holiness and justice, his love, and mercy, and grace:—all perfect, infinite, divine. He has looked at him as creating all things, and as the "former of his body, and the Father of his spirit"—the preserver of his life, and the bountiful giver of all he enjoys. Especially, he has looked at the gift of his own Son to die in our stead, and at all the privileges here, and the blessedness and glory hereafter, purchased by his blood.

And in presence of such a God, what is he?—"a creature of yesterday," who "knows nothing"—whose "foundation is in the dust, and who is crushed before the moth." In the presence of God he dwindles into nothing. Compared with some other orders of *creatures* he is inferior. In knowledge and wisdom the angels excel him. And in physical strength he is far outdone by some of the brute creation.—But in the presence of God especially, he feels himself to be infinitely small—"nothing, and less than nothing."

But in his *moral* character he feels more deeply still his distance from God. How can perfect moral pollution, as he is by nature, and in himself, come within the presence of infinite purity?—And then, again, how great his criminality! God, being his Creator, has an infinite claim to him, and all he has. God, being his Law-giver and Sovereign, has an infinite claim to all his services. But, instead of feeling that he is the Lord's, he has felt that he was *his own*. Instead of loving God with all the heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, he has been filled with hatred and enmity. Instead of reverencing and adoring, he has despised and contemned him. Instead of praising, he has blasphemed him,—at least forgotten all his benefits, and been silent in his praise. Instead of serving him with all his powers, he has constantly rebelled, and transgressed his holy law.

And where is that welcome and joyful reception of his Son who came and died to save him? Often and often has he turned his back, and spurned him away. And where is that ready yielding to the motions of the Spirit who has been sent to draw him to Christ

and heaven? Often has he resisted all the movings of that good Spirit.

And even after he had been renewed, and pardoned, and adopted as a child, and known the unspeakable delight of "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ," and had engaged and covenanted to follow his Saviour, and be obedient,—often has he forgotten all this mercy, and all this enjoyment, and all these engagements, and grown cold in his love, and neglected his service, and perhaps positively and openly transgressed his commandments.—Yea, after he had been pardoned afresh, and his backslidings had been healed, he has again and again relapsed and revolted.

He feels then that his criminality has been great; greater than tongue can speak, or heart conceive. He feels that the deepest hell is his desert. And as he looks on his sins, and looks on Christ who has suffered for him on the cross, his heart heaves, and is convulsed and broken. He is filled with grief unutterable. His heart throbs with godly sorrow. He seeks where he may retire from the bustle of business, hide himself from every human eye, and there fall down and pour out his soul in tears and confessions to God.

He is not unwilling to make confession *before men*. Nay, he desires it, and cannot help doing it. He cannot help justifying and giving glory to God, and taking all shame to himself, in the most public manner. As he has, before the world, dishonored and disobeyed God, he cannot help honoring him thus publicly before the world. But his way of doing it will not be worldly, and ostentatious, and noisy. The deepest rivers are still. There is a gentle motion perceived by the ear at the water's edge, but there is immense power out of sight. There is little language or ceremony when long-separated friends meet; but the heart finds a way to express itself in embraces and tears.—So the humble and penitent man uses few and modest words; but they indicate, by the manner in which they are used, strong, unseen, deep feeling in the heart.

But, as said before, he seeks retirement, where he may be alone with God. There he tells the whole. There, where his whole life, and whole heart are open,—there he "pours out the soul." There he lets the floods gush from his eyes. There he lets the heart bleed. There he sinks, or *would* sink, infinitely low. There is the mourning spoken of by the prophet Zechariah—a mourning for sin; like the feeling of one who is "in bitterness for his first-born." And ye who have lost a first-born know what that is.—A mourning, not public, not social—this is not enough,—private. "They shall mourn every family *apart*, and their wives apart."—Each one alone—alone

with God. This was the penitence of Peter. A look from Christ filled his heart, and he "went out"—went out to a retired place, where he could be alone, and there "wept bitterly."

This was the humility and penitence of Brainerd. "I fell down before the Lord, and groaned under my own vileness, barrenness, and deadness." "My heart was overwhelmed within me—I verily thought, I am the meanest, vilest creature living. It appeared impossible that one so vile should be thus employed—doing any special service for God in the world." This was the humility and penitence of Edwards. "Often I have had very affecting views of my own sinfulness and vileness; very frequently to such a degree as to keep me in a kind of loud weeping—so that I have often been forced to shut myself up. My sinfulness, as I am in myself, has long appeared to me perfectly ineffable, and swallowing up all thought and imagination like an infinite deluge or mountains over my head. I know not how to express better what my sins appear to me to be, than by heaping infinite upon infinite, and multiplying infinite by infinite. Very often, for these many years, these expressions are in my mind, and in my mouth, Infinite upon infinite—Infinite upon infinite! When I look into my heart and take a view of my sinfulness, it looks like an abyss deeper than hell. There was no part of creature holiness of which I had so great a sense of its loveliness, as humility, brokenness of heart, and poverty of spirit; and there was nothing that I so earnestly longed for. My heart panted after this;—that I might be nothing, and that God might be all."

This is humility and penitence. This is the poverty and contriteness of spirit brought to view in the text.

II. And how will this feeling show itself in the various conditions and intercourse of life?

(1.) *In submission to God.*—This man, feeling his infinite littleness, will not be offended by the lowest condition: nor, feeling his infinite vileness and his just desert of everlasting misery, will he think unjust or unkind any temporal evils.

To *poverty* he submits. Be it that he has not the luxuries and comforts, but the bare *necessaries* of life. Paul "knew how to be abased" and how to "suffer need," as well as how to "abound," and "how to be full." He was "content in whatsoever state he was," even were it his lot to suffer "nakedness," and "hunger" and "thirst."

To *sickness* and *pain* he submits. Be it that his frail body is laid on a bed of languishing. Be it that it is pierced through and through with the sharp arrows of the Almighty. What is this to the lake of fire in which he feels that he might have been justly doomed

to burn forever! Job, in such an evil case, said, "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" And Payson said, "These are God's arrows, but they are all sharpened by love." And another child of God, under the calamity of broken bones, and to her sympathizing, but perhaps inconsiderate friends, said, "I hope I have not a bone in my body which I am not willing to have broken, if it is the will of God."

To *bereavement* he submits. A child, a first-born, beautiful, intelligent, lovely, and full of promise, languishes and dies. Another child is taken, and another, and another! But all is right. God has taken only what was his,—only what the parent was utterly unworthy to possess *at all*, and clearly unworthy to retain longer. Look at Job, under the loss, not of one, but of *all*, and of all *at a stroke*. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord."

To a *low station* and *to obscurity* he submits. He sees one and another rising to distinction and borne upward on the acclaim of the multitude. In his view they may not be specially deserving of these honors. They may have obtained them by the partiality of friends, or by some accidental circumstance wholly disconnected with real merit. He, meanwhile, is retired and obscure, unknown and untalked of by the world. This is not a rare case, even with those who have great worth.

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

To the *want of literary advantages* he submits. He thirsts for learning, and pants for it "as the hart panteth after the water brooks." He longs to trace the whole circle of the sciences, and traverse the whole field of literature; but his health fails, or some other providential hinderance is thrown in his way, and he is compelled to stop. But he submits.

To *small success* he submits. In the enterprises for the advancement of education, which he had with much time and thought planned, he fails of success. Or he cannot bring others to embrace those important religious truths which he labors to inculcate. Or he cannot effect that reformation of morals, or that improvement in the church, for which he labors, and studies, and prays. But, much as others may succeed, and distressing to his benevolent heart as may be the failure in his own case, he submits. He is infinitely unworthy to be the instrument of *any* good, and shall he, such a sinner, complain?

To *neglect*, *slander*, and *cursing* he submits. There are those who endeavor in every way to blacken his character, to bring upon him contempt, to hedge up his way, and drive him from his place. They accuse him. They belie him. They condemn him. They say all manner of evil against him. They curse him. He dwells among those whose "teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword." Perhaps pretended friends, and those who have much influence, join in the slander. If they do not *literally* belie and slander him, they say things and do things which have all the *effect* of slander. They do, at least, suffer all this in silence, and thus by silence give consent; when they might, by timely aid, and timely vindication, frown into shame his opposers, and raise him up to higher standing than ever. Thus he comes to be treated with general coldness and neglect, and his influence is taken away. Thus at times was David treated, and Jeremiah, and Paul, and Edwards. But he submits. Look at David, from whom the hearts of Israel had been, by deceit and flattery, turned, and who was compelled to flee from the throne, and from Jerusalem. "Carry back," said he, "the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favor in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and show me both it and his habitation. But if he thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good unto him." And again: listen to him, when Shimei came out and cursed him: "Let him curse; for the Lord hath bidden him."

Once more: *to the sovereignty of God in bestowing his grace he submits.* He lives where the Spirit of God is poured out, and religion is revived. Great numbers are awakened and converted. But his son, dear as his own soul, is left in stupidity. He goes farther and farther from God. Again the Spirit is poured out. But this son is left to oppose the work, and to wax worse and worse. He flees from the means of grace—grows more and more wicked, and is cut off in all his sins. Ah! here is anguish which cannot be told. "Would to God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" But he submits. Shall he, a creature of a day, and a sinner so vile, dictate to God whom he shall save? "Thy will be done."

(2.) This feeling of humility shows itself in being satisfied with *the lowest place among men, consistent with the call of Providence.*

This man, feeling his infinite vileness, can hardly believe that any can be so vile as he. He feels that he is the least of the saints. He will, therefore, not only take the lowest place *before God*, but, "esteeming others better than himself," the lowest place *among men.*

This was the feeling of Paul. He not only thought himself the chief of sinners, but the least of the saints. Yea, more—he viewed himself to be "less than the least of all saints." And his whole life showed, that he sought the lowest place among men. He sought to be "least of all, and servant of all." He rejoiced when others were "honorable," and he was "despised;" and he took delight in "abasing himself." This was the feeling of Edwards: "I cannot bear the thoughts of being no more humble than other Christians. It seems to me, that though their degrees of humility may be suitable for them, yet it would be a vile self-exaltation in me not to be the lowest in humility of all mankind." This is the feeling of every humble and penitent man: he seeks the lowest place. This feeling, therefore, shows itself,

(3.) In a *modest, unassuming air:* Feeling his infinite littleness and his ignorance, he is sensible that he is liable to mistake on many points. He will not therefore bluster, and be confident and authoritative in argument and instruction. He will feel that he may be under a mistake as to the subject now before him, and others may be nearer the truth than he. Though he may have studied long, and taught long, and though the subject may appear to him very clear; yea, though he may seem to have done good by holding up the same views; yet he may be in error. He will, therefore, be modest in expressing his opinions, and show a high respect to the opinions of others:—especially will he do this when in the presence of those of more than ordinary talents, and education, and mental improvement. He will not seek to gain his point by ridicule, and sneers, and caricature; by wit; by sophistry; or by the authority of place, and office, and reputation. He *has* no point to *gain* but the truth. Personal victory and personal fame are out of view. It is the victory and reign of *truth* that he seeks. He will, therefore, be very respectful to others, and candidly and fairly weigh and state their opinions, and modestly hold up his own. Even if he is as sure of the correctness of his opinions as he is that the sun shines at midday,—and this on some points he may be, the deepest humility notwithstanding,—still, in the expression of them, he will be modest, rather than dogmatic and assuming. A creature so small, and a sinner so vile, he cannot, even in holding up *truth*, put on the air of pride and authority. He will hold it up as the rose puts forth its leaves of surpassing beauty, hidden, I had almost said, within itself. So in all his actions, and all his intercourse with men, he will be modest and unassuming.

(4.) This feeling will show itself *in joy at the prosperity of others.*

This man, as we have seen, has high and admiring thoughts of the perfections of God, natural and moral. Wherever, therefore, he sees the radiations of those attributes, or the image of those attributes, he will take pleasure in looking at them. Wherever he sees knowledge, and wisdom, and love, and holiness, he will rejoice. Wherever he sees a man of intelligence and holiness, reflecting brightly the image of Christ, and rapidly rising to higher attainments, it pours a tide of joy through his heart. Even if that man start up by his side, and soar on eagle's wings far above him, he still rejoices. Yea, though he rise from a place far below him, and pass and soar above him, he still rejoices. Envy has no place in his bosom. How can it? Feeling himself infinitely small, and infinitely vile, and esteeming others better than himself, where is there any room for envy? No! vile passion!—his lowly spirit shrinks from its touch. He cannot bear its pollution. No: he rejoices in all the attainments of others.

With what pleasure does Peter speak of the superior attainments of Paul! And with what pleasure does Paul himself speak of the excellences and distinction of other apostles! and of the precious grace of common Christians "who were in Christ before him!" and of all the gifts and attainments of his brethren! And so will the man of this spirit rejoice in *all* the good of others.

(5.) This feeling will show itself *in hearty forgiveness of injuries.* How can this man "take by the throat" a debtor who owes him a "hundred pence" only, when he himself owes his God "ten thousand talents, and has nothing to pay?" Be it that evil-minded men have done him an injury. Be it that they have heaped injury upon injury. Be it that they have taken his property, scattered his family, traduced his character, and done violence to his person. Be it that he is sinking in death under their ruthless hands—what is this to the dishonor which he has cast upon God?—to the injury he has done to his kingdom?—to the death which he has helped to inflict on his Son Jesus Christ?—And can he whose heart bleeds and bleeds for these sins of infinite malignity against God, be revengeful for the small offences of men—his fellow-sinners? Shall he who has been forgiven of God for even these sins, refuse to forgive a fellow worm? "Lord," said the dying Stephen, "lay not this sin to their charge." And so will the humble and penitent man in all cases forgive his enemies; and pray for them, and do them good.

(6.) This feeling shows itself in *readiness to acknowledge errors and faults.*

This man, feeling his infinite littleness, has no pride of under-

standing. He does not study and speak with a view to show himself a great man. It is the truth which he seeks, and the victory of truth for which he contends. Whenever, therefore, he finds his opinions to be wrong respecting principles or men, he will readily admit the fact. When he finds that his measures, resulting from these opinions, have been wrong and unwise, he will acknowledge it. He will not hold on upon his opinions and measures, laboring, with infinite pains, to show that they are correct. He will not practise mean evasion by pretending that he was misinformed; or did not understand the circumstances; or was not *himself* understood as to his opinions, or as to his intentions in what he did. He will frankly acknowledge that he was in error.

And so, whatever fault he has committed, or wrong thing done, he will acknowledge it. Feeling his infinite vileness and criminality, he has no pride of character. Whatever wrong, then, he has done to another—there being no pride to prevent a confession—he will frankly own it. He may sustain an office—he may be high in rank—he may be an editor, and his work extensively known; but he will acknowledge the error and the wrong. Look to the spirit of Brainerd: "If this were the case, that a man has done me a hundred injuries, and I (though ever so much provoked to it) have done him one, I am heartily willing humbly to confess my fault to him, and on my knees to ask forgiveness of him; though, at the same time, he should justify himself in all the injuries he has done me, and should only make use of my humble confession to blacken my character the more, and represent me as the only person guilty; yea, though he should, as it were, insult me, and say, 'he knew all this before, and that I was making work for repentance.'"

(7.) This feeling shows itself *in lively gratitude and fervent praise.*

To the man who feels deserving of eternal death, any privilege—any comfort, will seem unspeakably great:—a cup of water—a breath of air, will be such. Amid these great privileges, then—these comforts without number, which in even the worst condition he enjoys—especially pardon—Christ—the Holy Spirit—eternal life—his heart is full. "What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." And what are those praises I hear yonder? They come from the *dungeon!*—for Paul and Silas, smeared with blood, and smarting with stripes, and fastened in the stocks, are yet praising God! yea, amid exquisite pain and distress itself, he is grateful. "I have suf-

fered," says Payson, "twenty times, yes, to speak within bounds, twenty times as much as I could in being burnt at the stake, while my joy in God has been so abundant, as to render my sufferings not only tolerable, but welcome."

(8.) This feeling shows itself *in universal obedience.*

With those exalted thoughts of God, and that deep feeling of sorrow for having sinned, how can this man continue to disobey and dishonor God, whom he esteems to be, in every respect, infinitely above him,—whose, entirely, he feels that he and all that he has is,—and whom with his whole heart he loves! Break that law in which he ardently delights! Respect that sin, which he hates, and for which his heart bleeds! Can this be? Was such a thing ever known? No. "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." "I esteem all thy precepts, concerning all things, to be right; and I hate every false way." *Universal obedience*—this is what he renders. This is that "trembling at the word of God" spoken of in the text:—that reverencing, loving, and obeying his word, which are there implied.

This, then, is the feeling brought to view in the text;—and these some of the ways in which that feeling is shown.

III. Contemplate now the BLESSEDNESS of this man.

"To this man will I look." And where else, on earth, should he look? Where do you seek the most beautiful and most valued flower? Is it in the sun-flower, which, high in air, puts forth, nakedly and boldly, its whole form?—or in the rose, which almost hides itself from the eye? The mines of silver and gold are hidden in the earth. Pearls are at the ocean's bed. You admire the form of the earth—you admire the current of the rivers, and that immense power of machinery, and all that connected good, which this current produces—you admire the firm stand which you, and all that is yours, maintain on the surface of this solid earth—you admire the regular revolutions of the earth and other mighty orbs around the sun;—but the *cause* of all this—the attraction of gravitation is hidden from the eye. You see the flowers, and herbage, and fruits of the earth; but the fertility of the earth itself you cannot see. You see trees, and animals, and men, full of life, and growth, and strength, and activity: but the principle of life itself, what and where is it?—that you cannot see. You see the actions of a man, and hear his words, and look upon his countenance, and see the changes of features; and you feel his warm embrace; and you witness the knowledge, and holi-

ness, and happiness which he is extensively diffusing abroad: but the heart, the fountain of all this good, did you ever see that?

We see, then, that the most precious things—the most powerful—those on which all others depend, and without which all others are nothing—are not such as tower high: not such as show out before the eyes of men: not such as lie on the surface. They are retired—low—deep—hidden.

And where on earth shall God look? To the proud, and towering, and vain, and forward, and noisy, and boastful? Or shall he look to the humble and penitent?—to those who are retired—"unknown"—"hidden?" This—if there is any analogy between spiritual and temporal things—this is the precious spirit; and these are the precious ones. And where on earth shall God look but to this spirit, and to these persons?

Again: This spirit highly honors and exalts God. What can do it more? It places him upon the throne, infinitely high. It acknowledges, distinctly and emphatically, all his glorious attributes, natural and moral. Even his sovereignty in bestowing his grace,—his justice,—and his awful indignation at sin, it acknowledges as glorious attributes. And how can God help looking at that spirit which so truly and justly exalts himself?

And especially, this spirit acknowledges the perfections of God in the plan of *redemption*. It shows his infinite wisdom, love, and power, in this great scheme of salvation. It gloriously exalts the Saviour, Jesus Christ. How "wonderful" must he be, in greatness, in merit, in fulness, in love, and in power, who can save an innumerable multitude so vile, so criminal, so miserable, so deserving of eternal death! And how can God help looking at that spirit, which so exalts him, whom "all the angels worship," who is the "Fellow of the Lord of Hosts," whom we are required to "honor, even as we honor the Father," who alone hath "revealed" God, and in honoring whom we do especially honor the Father who sent him?

To this man, then, God will look:—look with interest—complacency—delight. You turn away from objects which are ugly and disgusting, and from the landscape which holds out to your eye nothing but moss-grown rocks, or a dead forest, or withered fields, or a sandy plain. But a beautiful flower, or tree, or animal; a landscape of verdure, and variety, and beauty, and sublimity,—these take your eye, and hold it. You turn with disgust from the face of an enemy: but from the friend who has your heart, you cannot look away. So God will fix his eye on the man who is humble and con-

trite; and with infinite love and delight; and from him he will not for a moment turn away. He "cannot look on iniquity;" and from the wicked he "hideth his face." But "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous."

And what good will come of God's thus looking to this man?

Every thing will be done for him. You do every thing for the tree which you value for its beauty, or its worth. You give it the best of soil; you protect it from being injured; you prune it; and you do every thing which may promote its growth, its beauty, its fruitfulness, its worth. You do every thing for the domestic animal you highly esteem, and on which you delight to look. You do every thing for the garden, or farm, on which you set a high value, and on which you love to look. So God will do every thing for the man to whom he thus looks;—every thing to promote his growth in grace, his usefulness, and his final blessedness and glory. If he sees that riches, and health, and friends, and learning, and office, and honor, will make him more holy or useful, he will give them. Or if he sees that other treatment will be best for him, and will more promote his usefulness, he will suffer trouble and affliction to come. He may let "all his waves and his billows go over him." Thus he may teach him the vanity of this world, and his own weakness and dependence, and bring him to trust more entirely in God. Thus he may give him opportunity to shine with a brighter lustre of holiness, and in this way to convince others of the reality, and excellence, and power of religion.

Yes; he may be stripped of health, and property, and friends, as was Job. He may be hated, and sold into bondage and imprisonment, like Joseph. He may be driven from his place, and from the house of God, and hunted from covert to covert in the wilderness, like David. He may be thrown into the fiery furnace, like the three Jews in Babylon; or into the lions' den, as Daniel. He may be scourged, and stoned, and thrown into prison, as the apostles. He may be martyred, as were Abel, and the prophets and apostles of the Lord; and as have been thousands of saints; even with all imaginable circumstances of torture and disgrace.

But the Lord "will look" to him still. He will watch over him. He will guard him as "the apple of his eye." He will not suffer any of his enemies to hurt him. He will not suffer any evil to touch him which will not purify him, and make him shine the brighter. If he send "tribulation," it is that it may "work patience, and experience, and hope that maketh not ashamed." If he is made to ex-

perience "infirmity," it is "that the power of Christ may rest upon him."

He will seek his greatest usefulness. If he is sold into Egypt and imprisoned, it is that he may save that and other people from famine, and provide a resting-place for the church of God. If he is hunted in the wilderness, and slandered, and cursed, it is that he may be a better king, and write better psalms for the church in all future time. If he is cast, in his wounds and blood, into the dungeon, it is that the jailer may be converted. If he and others are "scattered abroad" by persecution, it is that they may "go every where preaching the word." If he is carried in bonds to Rome, it is that he may preach the gospel in the metropolis of the world. God will stand by him, and assist him. He will, by the Holy Spirit, "teach him what to say;" "give him a mouth and wisdom, that all his adversaries will not be able to gainsay or resist." He will "work in" him, and work with him. "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season: his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." He may not *see* the prosperity. But he will, in the end, experience good "above what he asks, or thinks." His course, like that of the river, will be marked with verdure, and thrift, and beauty, and fruitfulness.

How could God help thus looking to, and thus blessing, Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Paul, Bunyan, Whitefield, Fletcher, Edwards, Brainerd, and others of the same spirit? And thus will he look to and bless the humble and penitent man in death. He will carry him safely and comfortably, perhaps triumphantly through. And what will he have in heaven? I might speak of his throne, and crown, and kingdom; I might speak of his shining as the firmament—as the stars—and as the sun. I might speak of the "fulness of joy," and "pleasures at God's right hand." But all this is feeble language. He will look upon God, and God will look upon him, for ever and ever! And what can he have more?

This subject has an important bearing,—

On all that is done for religion in the world. You form societies to do away vice, and to send the gospel through the earth. But your party-spirit, pride of understanding and worth, censoriousness, self-confidence and self-complacency, may both prejudice men against your enterprise, and turn away the face of God. You preach the gospel. But have you no pride of talent, of learning, of place, of notoriety and fame? Are you willing to preach in obscurity? Do

you "esteem" your brethren "better than yourself?" You preach the gospel. But where is that humility which will secure the complacent look of God, and his blessing on your efforts? You labor, as a private member, to purify and raise the church. But for lack of humility and contrition God is not with you, and the church is made worse rather than better. You labor to convert sinners. But wanting this spirit God is not with you, and you harden them the more. O, were all Christians of this humble and contrite spirit, legions would fall before them, and the world would submit to Christ.

Finally: this subject has an important bearing *on the individual safety and happiness of every one.* Have *you* this spirit? Blessed man! God looks to you, and loves to look, and will look, and smile for ever. But ah! how many who have it not!—and many who have hope!—and many in the church!—and many, shall I say, who are high in office and honor! Vain mortals! "How can ye believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor which cometh from God only?" Proud followers of the meek and lowly Jesus! How incongruous the thought! O, "the face of God is against you." "God resisteth the proud." He will frown you away into "outer darkness," and his "wrath will abide upon you forever!

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SERMON CCLVI.

BY REV. DAVID ABEEL.

Missionary to China.

HAPPY INFLUENCE OF FOREIGN MISSIONS ON THE CHURCH.

Isaiah liv. 2.—*Spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.*

The text is a command given to the church,—in other words, a duty enjoined upon Christians. The only way to ascertain both its precise meaning and the best mode of its accomplishment, is to consult the preceding and following verses. "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations. Spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes—for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inherited."

The whole passage, then, refers to the conversion of the Gentiles, or heathen, and furnishes the following important suggestion, that

THERE IS NO SYSTEM OF MEANS SO WELL CALCULATED TO GIVE EXPANSION AND STABILITY TO THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, NOT MERELY TO LENGTHEN HER CORDS, BUT ALSO TO STRENGTHEN HER STAKES, AS FOREIGN MISSIONARY OPERATIONS.

The direct benefits of missionary exertions upon the heathen, and

their reflex action upon the churches which put forth these exertions, are both to be considered in estimating the efficacy of these means. It is a question of great interest, and one which cannot be too freely discussed, nor too quickly determined, whether, for the good of the world, the main energies of the church ought to be expended upon countries nominally Christian and comparatively limited, or upon the more extensive and populous regions now shrouded in pagan darkness and Mohammedan delusion. The decision of this question would indicate duty to many a mind now vacillating and distressed; it would assure the confidence of the doubtful; it would recall his distracted attention, and concentrate his divided efforts; it would send forth streams of vital influence through those appropriate channels, which, for aught we know, are now empty and dry.

There are several reasons which are supposed by many to favor the opinion, that Christian exertion is less productive among pagan nations than at home. In the first place, there are preliminary barriers which oppose the efforts of the missionary, and which do not exist in Christian lands. Of these, the most important are *strange languages* and *strong prejudices*. That these are real obstacles, ignorance alone will deny. There is perhaps nothing more trying to a sensitive heart, than to be surrounded by crowds of deluded and dying men, between whom and yourself there is no medium of intellectual communication. An ocean rolling between could not more effectually separate you from the objects of your compassion. In some countries, the difficulties of acquiring languages yield to nothing but the most persevering labor. This, however, is not everywhere the case. Perhaps no two languages are equally difficult of attainment. There are places where even transient traders and travellers pick up the native tongue, and soon become eloquent in its employment. As the number of missionaries increases, the difficulties of languages are reduced, and the facilities for their acquisition multiplied. Nay, missionaries not merely abbreviate the term of pupilage to their successors, but furnish them with useful labor even during their necessary studies. There are daily services to be performed at every station, which cannot be dispensed with, and which do not demand the employment of the tongue. These services are generally proportioned, in number and variety, to the efficiency of the men engaged.

Another preliminary obstacle mentioned, to the successful efforts of the missionary, is prejudice. In a few prominent heathen countries of the world, this barrier appears almost impregnable. China, Japan, and Cochin China, have marshalled their forces on their frontiers, and bade defiance to foreign aggression. But even to these countries there are points of attack which they cannot guard. The Gospel is gaining access to China through numerous channels, and sooner or later every barrier shall be undermined, and a highway through every part of this empire be prepared for the servants of the Lord.

In almost every heathen land, where missionary effort has been continued for any considerable time, prejudices have invariably yielded; and generally when they begin to subside, they rapidly disappear, and seldom return. We do not wish to overlook nor to underrate the difficulties of language and prejudice in heathen lands; but is there nothing corresponding to these obstacles where the Gospel is known? Are there no serious barriers to usefulness in Christian countries? Is not much time necessarily consumed in adapting ourselves to the habits, and fashions, and fancies of the Christian world? What precious and protracted periods are devoted to such a course of reading and writing, and to such a compliance with the prescribed modes of ordinary life, as fills the heart of many a faithful minister with regrets, and his mouth with daily complaints. These things exist to a much more limited extent—if they exist at all—at mission stations. It is true, the necessity of translating and writing, in the foreign field, demands exertion; but this is generally the work of a few, and the literary productions of the rest are nearly equalled in number by those of ministers at home, in this age of abounding publications. It is a common sentiment—at least it has its strong practical evidence—that authorship increases usefulness. On this supposition, the greater the number of Christian books prepared in native languages, the more productive the labor. And here it is necessary to notice the difference between works prepared in languages employed in Christian lands, and among the heathen. An extra lamp suspended in a hall gleaming with light, may add a little to the glare; but what is this compared with the sun, or the moon, or the brilliant lamps of heaven, where the space is wide, and the darkness total?

2. Another reason for which, it is believed, Christian effort is more

profitable at home than abroad, is the systematic and stubborn opposition which the Gospel meets from the established forms of civil government and pagan superstition. How far such opposition will be exerted where the Romish religion has loaded the cause of Christianity with its own opprobrium, we can only conjecture. Experiment has proved, that these obstacles scarcely ever prevent the introduction of the Gospel, or greatly arrest its progress in any country. In many places, the policy of the government, and the prejudices of the people, have opposed no barrier—at least, no serious obstacle—to the spread of Christianity. Of one thing we may rest assured, the influence from this quarter must be powerful, if it present a more unyielding obstruction to the truth than infidelity, libertinism, Gospel-insensibility, latitudinarianism, antinomianism, and all those numerous errors of doctrine and practice, which mar the beauty and sap the vitals of the Christian church.

3. A third reason, which may be supposed to operate against the comparative advantages of foreign missionary labor, is the risk and waste of life which it involves. If there be, as there doubtless is, a difference in the mortality of ministers in pagan and Christian nations, the reasons are obvious—the number of missionaries is so limited, that they labor harder, and suffer more, than their brethren at home; and thus far, they have occupied the most unhealthful positions, often under the greatest disadvantages. When missionaries are sent forth in sufficient numbers to supply the stations now possessed, and to occupy the far more extensive and important countries of Northern India, and all the higher divisions of Asia and Europe, the scale will turn, and health and life will probably be enjoyed to as great a degree and protracted a limit in the unevangelical world, as within the present boundaries of Christendom.

These are the principal reasons for which any can believe that the servants of Christ are likely to be less useful among the heathen than in their own country. But even in this aspect of the subject, there is so little difference between the real obstacles to success in foreign and domestic stations, that at most, only a trifling advantage can be conceded to the latter. This, however, is but one view of the subject. There are arguments which favor the opposite opinion. There are arguments which give a high degree of probability to the conclusion, that the direct results of Gospel effort are greater in pagan

than in Christian lands. Among the reasons for such an opinion, is that one which induces almost all ministers of the sanctuary to exchange the sphere of their labor at home; and which would, if they were consistent with their principles, send great numbers of them abroad—the souls to be saved are much more numerous—much more needy.

Another reason is, the means of usefulness are both more various and extensively operative. Besides the pastoral functions which are exercised profitably, except in the newest stations, there are schools to be taught or superintended—books to be scattered over hundreds and thousands of miles, and among millions of minds—itinerant labor to be performed in populous cities and villages, where thousands convene for trade, and tens of thousands for idolatrous festivals; and, in many places, medicines to be administered to crowds, who feel their obligations, and are prepared for your instructions. How different from the prescribed routine at home. Here modes of labor are defined in their nature, and greatly in their extent, by the forms of society—the comparatively small number of population, and the fear of trespassing upon the provinces of the many fellow-laborers, by whom each one is surrounded and barricaded. We have known of striking instances in which the books, unaccompanied by oral explanation, have shed sufficient light to restore the guilty idolator to his God. Should this be the case to any considerable extent, we need no other argument than the quantities of books we distribute, to decide the direct results of ministerial labor in our favor.

Another reason which shows the superior influence of foreign labor, is the activity of native converts. Their external condition differs essentially from that of other Christians. If they love the Saviour, and know the design of his coming—if they have the least affection for their relatives, their friends, their countrymen—all enveloped in darkness, and immersed in crime—they must be ardent and active.

Notwithstanding all that has been uttered by foes, and feared by friends, of the comparative fruitlessness of foreign missions, if the number of converts in Christian and heathen lands were divided by the proportion of Gospel-ministers allotted to each sphere of labor, it is probable Christians at home would never again put the question, where are the fruits of foreign missions? Take for example the Poly-

nesian Islands, New Zealand, Burmah, Southern India, Ceylon, South Africa, Greenland, the West Indies among the slaves. Where in Christian lands can we find places in which the same means have been blessed with equal results. And, let it be remembered, our selection embraces nearly all the stations where the work of missions has been undertaken with any thing like wisdom and energy. In other countries, the amount of effort made has been mere child's play. The churches have sent one man to an island, a second to an empire, and a third to a continent.

If, in connection with the number of souls actually saved, we estimate the instrumentality prepared, not only for present, but for future operation, we believe but few could hesitate in ascribing the greater influence upon the church and the world, to foreign missionary exertion. And even if it could be shown that Christian efforts among the heathen are not as productive as at home, even then the chief argument which supports the doctrine presented in the text, remains untouched.

We believe that *foreign missions are the best means of lengthening the cords and strengthening the stakes of the church, because they establish and promote an action and reaction between themselves and the churches, which is most powerful and advantageous to both parties.* This may be demonstrated by several facts.

I. Missionary labor increases the piety and energy of the churches. The missionary spirit includes among its essential endowments, faith, prayer, self-denial, deadness to the world, charity, beneficence, heavenly-mindedness, a willingness to submit to sufferings and hazards, and a supreme regard for the glory of God. We do not wish to imply, that every missionary possesses these qualifications. We simply declare that these are the elements of that character, without which they are unfit for their office. If such be the spirit which disposes and prepares men to engage in the work of converting the heathen, it is not difficult to perceive how the churches are benefitted by missionary labor.

There is the stimulus of example, than which nothing is more influential. Hold up to the churches those with whom they are under equal obligations, but who have far exceeded them in the "work of faith, and labor of love," and you bring a motive to bear upon them which piety cannot resist.

It operates through sympathy. We are brethren. Our work, our aim, our strongest desires, our highest honor, our dearest interests, our eternal recompense, are the same. Just so far as we are sanctified, what one feels, and attempts, and accomplishes, must powerfully interest and actuate another.

Again, *there is the duty and blessedness of necessary co-operation.* We must labor together. Missionaries are the messengers of the churches. The churches must send them forth, sustain them with their prayers and contributions, and supply the increasing demand for men, which the opening fields require. The energy of the one increases the energy of the other. The missionary prepares work for the churches, and throws the obligation of its performance upon them; and can the churches remain inactive, when urged to exertion by such a fearful responsibility?

Again, *it diverts the mind from those unimportant points of doctrinal difference, and metaphysical distinction, and abstruse speculation,* which squander the time, and pervert the talents, and ruin the souls of thousands. It places us in full front of the enemy. It teaches us the necessity of concerted and concentrated action. It proves that neither allegiance, nor courage, nor conquest, depend upon the dress or the language of the companies. Nay, more, it proclaims the unutterable folly and phrensy of those who forget their vigilant and vigorous foes, and turn their arms upon themselves.

It operates, too, through the influence of its own greatness. It expands the mind, liberalizes the soul, elevates the aim, arouses faculties and feelings which nothing else could have addressed, and produces efforts and results which no other object could command.

These are some of the invaluable effects of missions upon the churches. But where are your *facts?* say they who regard this doctrine as a mere splendid theory. Such facts we are capable of furnishing.

The missionary *himself* exhibits the powerful reflex influence of his undertaking. While those who knew him in his native land, may have wondered at the unexpected talent and energy he displays among the heathen, this will explain the difference. His character has been disciplined and improved. He has become capable of exertions for which his powers appeared inadequate before.

And then, beside the increase of his own mental and moral energy, his conspicuous situation has extended his relations, and given him an influence which he never could have exerted at home. However favorably he may have been regarded before, he now appears in a new capacity. Thousands who would never have known him, except as a missionary, read his communications, and receive the impressions they are calculated to produce. Here, then, is not simply a new stimulus to action, but a new medium through which usefulness may be extended.

In the second place, the reaction is most salutary upon the *particular friends* of the missionaries and their cause. But the operation extends beyond the private circle. Wherever there is the greatest degree of piety, there is the most lively susceptibility on this subject; and as the cause of missions becomes better known and appreciated, the interest of Christians must spread and deepen, until all will sympathize with the Saviour, and all live to obey his last most important command.

Where is there a minister of the Gospel, possessing the spirit of his Master, who is not stimulated and invigorated by the self-denying labors of his missionary brethren? Trace out the influence through these channels of spiritual blessing to the world, and see what must be its boundless results.

Nothing more powerfully arrests the attention of *youth and children*, than missionary narratives. By these means they are taught how much they differ from the heathen, and how they ought to pray, and contribute, and labor for their salvation. We are struck with this new and promising feature in the Christian community, as we pass through the churches. In schools and private families, we are greeted with the smiles of infancy, while little hands are stretched out to present their mite, saved for the benefit of the heathen. Visit the Sabbath and infant schools throughout the country, and see the thousands of children, who, within a few years, have been awakened to new interests, and new modes of beneficence, by the progress of missions. Hundreds of dollars are now annually raised, through the gatherings and savings of children, who, a few years ago, never contributed to any object. I visited one school, containing one hundred and fifty scholars, in which three hundred dollars had been raised

within the last year for foreign missions. Is there no promise in this incipient and self-denying benevolence? Will not the church, as well as the world, enjoy its inestimable advantages?

Much has been attributed to the reaction of missions, as a means of producing our *revivals*, and improving all our home institutions. How much the education, and tract, and Bible societies owe to the strong appeals we furnish them, let the burden of their reports, and especially the eloquence of their agents attest.

These are some of the channels through which the richest blessings are poured into the churches from the missionary stations. We know that every missionary has not exerted an extensive and benign influence. We refer rather to office, than its incumbent. But if the situation be so commanding, is it not credible that its occupants will labor with incomparably greater effect, than in stations they would probably fill in the domestic department? If the beneficial tendency of their exertions upon Christendom was the only inducement to enter upon a missionary life, we wonder how such crowds of young men dare refuse their agency.

II. Missionary operations not only increase the piety and energy of the churches, but greatly assist in supplying their domestic destitution.

Our former position being admitted, this is its legitimate consequence. If every Christian could be brought to employ all his talents, it would require but a small proportion of the present number—perhaps only the reduced proportion of Gideon's army—to accomplish a greater amount of good than is now effected. That ten thousand ministers in the United States, and more than fifteen hundred thousand professing Christians should produce so little religious effect among only fourteen millions of souls, not the half of them adults, is almost incredible, especially when we measure the ability of all by the usefulness of a few. Let the spiritual torpor which now curses the Christian church be removed—let universal life reanimate her ministers and laymen, and converts would greatly multiply, and revivals spread—the young men would be sanctified—the ranks of the ministry replenished, and Zion would appear clothed in the beauty and majesty of her Lord.

We have referred to the influence of foreign missions upon the young. Many a converted youth has had his attention directed to

the ministry through the reading of missionary journals. I have two instances in my mind, of the most promising men this country has ever produced. One occupies a distinguished position in the churches; the other strikes his harp to a Saviour's love in regions of perfect delight. Those who remain in their native country are prepared by the same influence for every kind of trying service. Here again I could mention cases of peculiar usefulness—men who had devoted their lives to missions, but were providentially detained at home. Witness the recent and growing interest manifested for the spiritual improvement of our slave population and western citizens. The claims of these portions of our community are assigned by multitudes as their only reason for not engaging in foreign missions. In the exact measure that young men are actuated by missionary zeal, are they prepared for those stations at home which demand sacrifice and diligence, and which yield but little worldly compensation.

The reaction of missions upon the domestic interests of individual denominations, is instructive. The Moravians began the noble effort for the conversion of the heathen, about a century ago. A congregation consisting of six hundred individuals, principally exiles, organized themselves into a missionary body at Hurnhut, and nobly resolved to aim at sending the Gospel through the world. The liberal soul has been made fat. Forty stations among the heathen—more than two hundred missionaries, and upwards of forty thousand converts, proclaim the blessing of God upon their efforts. The little band has multiplied itself into eighty congregations at home, and the small sum they could at first spare out of their penury, has increased to an annual collection of sixty thousand dollars.

Brethren, do you inquire why it is that we love to single out this example? I would ask you in reply, why is it that you and your fellow-Christians furnish us with no other? If you would only make the experiment, we could give you all the illustrations you require. To the shame of protestant Christendom, this is the only church which could with any propriety be called a missionary body. Other sects, as far as they have evinced any thing like the same spirit, have reaped the same fruits.

The churches are beginning to look upon the missionary enterprize with an eye of favor, and no doubt that denomination will become the most popular and powerful, which combines with the purity

of its doctrines, the strongest zeal in their promulgation. It is to seminaries pervaded by this spirit, that young men, and those of the greatest promise, will resort. It is under this banner that individuals and churches, repelled by bigotry, wearied with bickerings, and emaciated by error, will range themselves and prosper.

When we speak of the vigor, which missionary exertions throw into our domestic institutions, we refer to a very natural operation. That man who has courage to attempt a great enterprize despises the difficulties of a small one. The energy produced by the one, overlooks all the appalling trifles of the other. When have the churches ever accomplished so much for America as since they have put forth special efforts for the heathen?

III. The church through missionary efforts, places herself in the best and indeed in the only position for receiving the most abundant spiritual blessings. In the first place, these efforts have a direct tendency to remove the most serious obstructions to piety and efficiency. Where the work of evangelizing the world is carried on with energy, it indicates and produces self-denial and liberality. We need not stop to show that nothing is more repugnant to eminent holiness, or usefulness, than a selfish parsimonious spirit. It is abhorrent in the eyes of a Holy God. "For the iniquity of his covetousness," said Jehovah, "was I wroth and smote him." However paradoxical it may appear, it is true, that they who give the most, have the most to give. Their ability increases with the benevolence of their dispositions. There are those which scatter and yet increase. "But this I say," is the instructive lesson of inspiration on this point, "he which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly nor of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye always, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." What terms more explicit and emphatic could be employed?

But missionary zeal not only removes those encumbrances, which enchain our energies—it not only increases our ability to receive and communicate spiritual blessings; but it secures to us those promises which are connected with enlarged exertions. "The liberal soul shall be made fat, and he that watereth shall be watered also himself. If thou draw out thy soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflict-

ed soul, then shall thy light rise in obscurity and thy darkness be as the noon day, and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought; and make fat thy bones. And thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not, and they that shall be of thee, shall build the old waste places. Thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations, and thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach—the restorer of paths to dwell in."

With promises so unrestricted, have we attributed too much to the influence of missions upon their friends and supporters? And as these promises are made only to the benevolent; can they be realized, to those who neglect the most prominent objects of mercy? Since none can hope to prosper, who disobey an express command, then they who aim at the universal triumph of Christianity, and none but they can effect the blessings enumerated in these texts. "O, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments, then had thy peace been as a river and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea, thy seed also had been as the sand and the offspring of thy bowels as the gravel thereof."

If then the reaction of missionary labor be so salutary to the church—if it tends to increase her piety and energy—if it aid in supplying her domestic destitution, and if it place her in the only position, in which she can expect the greatest spiritual blessings—then

IV. It must encourage, and enable the church, still more to extend her limits, and thus to return to the heathen world, the full influence of her improved condition. This consequence is certain. It would be a dictate of selfish policy, if it were only a secular interest. Missionary effort is its own reward.

We have seen that it not only demands large resourses; but supplies the resourses it demands—There is however, a nobler principle for this enlarged policy, than personal recompense. Confidence is gathered from success and energy from action. Nothing so effectually convinces the church of the impotence of her own might, and the necessity and adequacy of her Redeemer's promised aid, as the effort to restore a rebellious world to its God. It is the most stupendous enterprize, in which mortals have an agency. It taxes the utmost strength and then makes demands upon faith, which infinitude alone can meet. One reason why so little is accomplished by Christians is, they make such feeble and irresolute experiments. They

measure their duty by their untasked ability and untried faith. What has not been accomplished by those, who were strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might? What would not be effected, if we took the Lord at his word, and attempted what his commands enjoin? Just so far as the church can be prompted to exertion, will she gather confidence for new and greater efforts, until finding herself omnipotent in the strength of her Lord she makes her final struggle, and lays a conquered world at the expectant Saviour's feet.

This subject teaches, that lengthening the cords of the church, is strengthening her stakes. The two are inseparable and they who confine themselves within their own limits, and labor first and exclusively to improve their domestic interests, without obeying the injunction, and following the order of the text, will probably accomplish as little at home as they attempt abroad. The spirit itself is wrong. We have no right to make that distinction between the domestic and foreign field—between ministerial and missionary obligation, which the bible no where recognizes but every where rejects. How is it possible that we can learn the rule and object of the ministerial office from the bible and yet believe that our principal exertions should be limited to the one seventieth part of the habitable world!

Our only authority for preaching the gospel—the promises and predictions of the word of God—the purchase of the Saviour's death—the triumph of his oppressed church—the highest glory of his mediatorial reign,—all demand the universal diffusion and dominion of Christianity.

The Apostles who received the commands of the Saviour from his divine lips, and who were inspired both to comprehend, and fulfill them, have marked out the course of their successors. There was a peculiar alliance existing between the seed of Abraham, and their covenant God, and it was for this reason, and not on account of mere private relationship that the Apostles were instructed to begin at Jerusalem. But how did they interpret, and obey this clause of their commission? One of them remained permanently at Jerusalem—the rest left their native land and kindred and went every where preaching the Gospel of the kingdom. Paul has taught us his interest in his countrymen. "His heart's desire and prayer to God, for Israel" was that they might be saved. He could "wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren,—his kinsmen, according to the flesh:" and yet while multitudes of his countrymen were perishing, and he

knew it, he went far hence, to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. Most evidently he must either have considered his obligations, as connected more with the number to be saved, than with his personal relationship to them, or he must have believed that he was doing more for the benefit of his countrymen by foreign than domestic labor.

If then we have not mistaken the genius of the Gospel, the commcommand of the Saviour, and the spirit and policy of his Apostles, we may learn how to promote the interests of the body to which we belong. If with the purity of her faith, the harmony of her measures, and the mutual confidence of her children, the church of our fathers should arise, and in the strength of her Saviour's promise, devote her main energies to the conversion of the benighted and neglected nations of the earth; we believe she would soon far exceed her present strength and limits, and if her bright example was not followed, outgrow as well as outstrip every other Christian body in the land. We do not derogate from the importance which may attach to domestic interests; but we do dissent totally, from the opinion, that they merit that priority and almost exclusiveness of attention which they have recieved. If what has been advanced in reference to the reaction of missionary labor be true—if the corresponding sentiment of multitudes the most judicious and devoted in the land be correct, there can be no question, that our prosperity will be proportioned to our efforts in the cause. Shall we not then arise, and take a stand on this subject? Ought not the church to equip herself for this warfare? Should not all her institutions, and resources be brought to bear upon this most desirable object? We pray for her peace, and desire her prosperity—here are the means to obtain them both.

And even if there were no superior advantages resulting to our own country and kindred, from foreign missions, the command of Christ and the necessity of its fulfilment remain the same.

Christian brethren, we are debtors to our Saviour,—we are debtors to the heathen. The highest honor of the one—the greatest happiness of the other, alike demand the universal diffusion of Christianity. We are guilty of rebellion against the Saviour—we rob the ignorant and perishing of their due, if we refuse to preach the Gospel to every creature. With as much justice, may we withhold the property of one to give it to another, as monopolize the blessings of Christianity or offer them only to our friends, when they are equally designed for the world.

Christians have lost sight of their inviolable obligations. They regard the salvation of the world, as a work of gratuity: some fancy it a work even of supererogation. We all act as though we had the liberty to withhold the eternal life, and seal the eternal death of those countless millions, whom Christ has thrown upon our mercy, for their all. Nay, brethren, we act as though we were resolved, in violation of all justice and mercy, to leave a prostrate, bleeding world to perish. As Christians we must not exclude from our minds the truth that where there is one soul to be saved in America, scores are perishing in other countries. We are bound to remember that the number of Gospel ministers in America and in Pagan countries, differs, not in proportion to the multiplicity, but the paucity of souls—not according to the necessities but the supplies of the places. Here there are comparitively few to be saved; there crowds are lying in hopeless, helpless wretchedness. None of these few are obliged to sink into hell—none of those crowds, we fear can rise to heaven. They know of no Saviour.

Brethren, overlook the scanty limits which define your native land, and gaze upon the world—the Gospel field. What an affecting, sickening spectacle! Covered with the dead and dying—crowded with the ignorant and miserable—the darkness that shrouds it how deep and starless! O, how few, how glimmering, how widely separated, are "the lamps of life" borne hence by the missionaries. Islands, kingdoms, and empires, without a soul, who can teach, that there is a Saviour—and yet all totally unfit for heaven—in equal need of salvation with ourselves. If there be any thing in present suffering—any thing in spiritual ignorance—unrestrained depravity—irresistible temptation and hopeless misery—any thing in the eternal and irremediable destruction of millions of immortal beings,—compassionate majority of mankind. Who, that can leave a land where so few live to perish, and so many labor to save them, ought not to go? Would not the places now occupied, be filled? Would not the souls now taught, be instructed by others? And can we refuse to go where none will supply our places, and the souls we might rescue from hell cannot be delivered without us? If going reacts upon the best interests of the churches—if staying keeps millions out of their dues—out of heaven—what is wanting but the spirit of our office to swell the numbers of missionaries a hundred, nay a thousand fold? Who will go? Who that feels himself excluded from the privilege by some insuperable obstacle, will not interest others, and pray, and contribute, and plead

for this object? We appeal to all. Centuries have rolled away unimproved. Unnumbered millions have passed into an awful eternity—legions are daily swelling the catalogue of the hopeless dead—not a moment remains to be lost. O, when will the redeemed of the Lord sympathize and co-operate with their Saviour in reclaiming a fallen world!

Church of the living God! awake. Thy slumbers, O how guilty, how cruel! Thy husband—thy Redeemer bids thee awake; and what he says to all, he says to each—awake!

Here we would close; but we cannot. There are those present who have had no interest in this discussion—some who have probably not listened to one half of its sentiments. The reasons are obvious. They have no interest in the heathen and none in the churches, because they have no interest in the Saviour, and none in themselves. What shall we say to such? Shall we call them blind—deaf—dead? This might delude them, with the imagination that they are objects of misfortune, not subjects of guilt. "For this people's heart is waxed gross," in the language of the Saviour, "and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their hearts, and should be converted, and I should heal them." Fearful iniquity! after guilt had been contracted, and pardon most generously proffered—to double that guilt by despising the pardon! And O, wondrous mercy—that not only has received the sword of justice in its own bosom; but stays the uplifted arm that would bathe that glittering blade in the despiser's heart! My impenitent hearers, if there be guilt under heaven it rests upon you—if there be compassion in heaven, it seems to have been well nigh expended upon you. What have you not deserved? for what have you not resisted? What could have been done for you and to you, that God has not done? O, let his goodness, at last, lead you to repentance.

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SERMON CCLVII.

BY REV. MAURICE W. DWIGHT.

Brooklyn, N. Y.

THE GUILT AND DANGER OF READING INFIDEL, FICTITIOUS, AND IMPURE WORKS.

Acts xix. 19. 20.—*Many also of them which used curious arts, brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed.*

Prov. xix. 27.—*Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.*

By "the words of knowledge" we are to understand that system of Divine teaching, the cordial reception of which is *true religion.* "The instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge" is that which is opposed to the moral welfare of mankind; which tends to poison their principles, and corrupt their practice. Of such instructions the world is full. They surround us like pestilential vapors; and as it is the dictate of prudence to avoid the one, so it is infinitely wise to shun the other. The oldest library of which we have any account was established among the Egyptians by their king Osymandias; and upon the front of it bore this inscription,—"Food for the mind." This is what books were designed to be; and it is only when they bear this character, that they can be used with safety. We naturally become assimilated to objects with which we are intimately conversant. In reading books we often hold closer communion with the spirits of their authors, than when in personal intercourse; and evil communications corrupt good manners as certainly in the one case as in the other. Many, however, who are alive to the dangers of bad company, are insensible to that which flows

from bad books. They devour without suspicion every thing which promises to gratify curiosity, or furnish entertainment; and swallow poison when they should be taking nourishment.

The present is a reading age; the world is flooded with books; and individuals of every class, but particularly the young, need the admonition of the text. "Cease, my son, from the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge." Permit me then, in accordance with the spirit of the text, to direct your attention to

I. The Books which are sources of corruption.

II. The Evils which flow from them.

I. The Books which are sources of corruption.

The first class are those which wage open and direct warfare against religion. The leading popular works of this class were written by men of acute minds, distinguished for their knowledge of the world, and impelled to their task by a fiend-like hatred of the object of their assault. Were there not a congenial spirit in the sinful heart, the sophistries of Hume with all their ingenuity, the wit and sprightliness of Voltaire, the eloquence of Rousseau, and the obscenities and ribaldries of Paine and his vulgar herd of imitators, would scarcely awaken sufficient interest to induce the mind to wander through their pages. But unhappily this affinity exists, and with a power of attraction sufficient to give them a cordial welcome, and secure to them a wide circulation. They are found in almost every community, and are read with avidity by age and youth, but particularly the latter.

As the aim of these writers is to rend asunder every tie which binds man to the throne of God; to destroy all sense of moral obligation! to induce man to renounce his allegiance to the government of Jehovah, despise his authority, trample upon his laws, and be a god to himself; they dispute the Divine existence; or if it be admitted that there is a God, they deny that he takes cognizance of the affairs of men; death is pronounced an eternal sleep; the Bible is treated with contempt and scorn, as an imposition upon the credulity of the world, a fabrication of designing priests, a tissue of absurdity and falsehood; virtue and vice, truth and falsehood, are reprobated as distinctions made to rob men of their natural liberty; Jesus Christ is held up to derision as a deceiver and vile impostor; prophecies are denounced as lies; miracles as cheats; the judgment, heaven, and hell, are scouted and scoffed at, as the dreams of enthusiasm, bugbears to frighten children; human accountability is made a subject of ridicule; and man is taught to lie, defraud, commit adultery or suicide, according to his pleasure.

The great object they have in view is to establish the reign of licentiousness, in which passion and appetite, and lust may walk

abroad without shame, and be indulged without control. In this manner and for such purposes, genius, learning, eloquence and wit, which might have adorned and blessed the world, have prostituted themselves.

It tells but little in favor of the moral condition of our race, when men so employ exalted powers of mind, and interest prompts to the publication of such works, and multitudes are found to read them with avidity and imbibe their principles. But they release from the restraints of the gospel, and vindicate the ways of iniquity; the sinful heart therefore will take pleasure in them.

Let the young be warned against them. They are subtle, yet sophistical, full of bold assertion, misrepresentation, and falsehood; they substitute sneers and ridicule for fact and argument; and though they have been triumphantly refuted a thousand times, still their circulation is encouraged to the ruin of many.

2. Another class of destructive books are the licentious and impure. These, though not written with the same professed design, take the surest method of accomplishing it. For

> "Errors in the life, breed errors in the brain,
> And these reciprocally those again."

Some of these are the grossest vehicles of impurity. Others, like the sheet let down before the scrupulous apostle, are full of all manner of beasts, both of the clean and the unclean. And while the dress of the former shares the coarseness and vulgarity of their sentiments, the latter have summoned to their aid all the eloquence of prose and all the attractions of poetry. Their authors with a brow of brass, and a heart that is the sink of pollution, devote themselves to the business of corrupting the imagination, inflaming the passions and exciting lust; and through their instrumentality passions and lusts are stirred up, which subvert the order of society, and waste the happiness of individuals and families, and which, but for the influence of such books, might have slept forever in the bosom.

On their pages genius appears sadly perverted from its proper office, ministering to the corrupt taste of vice and profligacy. It may be regarded as treason against the cause of literature to name in this connection some of the authors now alluded to. Fielding, Smollet, Sterne, Moore, and Byron, are proud names on the literary annals of the world. But shall the savage spirit of the lion and the leopard be concealed from the public mind, and they have privilege to hurt and destroy at pleasure, because of the nobleness of their natures or the beauty of their appearance?

The wide-spread pestilence, beneath whose arm the strong men faint at the tops of the streets, and the mighty sink in helplessness on their beds and in their graves, is far less to be dreaded, than these

poisonous fountains, whose waters cause the soul to stagnate and perish in its own corruptions. They cannot be read in company but at the expense of decency, nor in the closet without opening the heart to every foul spirit. The foundations of society are convulsed and overthrown by them, and man in all his pride and glory degraded beneath the level of the brutes that perish.

3. A third class of pernicious writings are works of imagination and fiction.

In this we include novels, romances, and plays. They exceed in number both of the others, and are generally far less exceptionable in their character. Their avowed object is to enlarge our acquaintance with human nature, and cherish a love of virtue, and a hatred of vice. Did they fulfil the promises of which their authors are lavish, the civilized world would present a very different picture from that which now every where meets the eye. Instead of vice enthroned as a queen, idolized and worshipped as the source of honor, office, influence, and wealth, virtue would be in the ascendant, and reign and triumph among men. But while they profess to make the world wiser and better, the result of their labors is to furnish amusement, and enlarge and perpetuate the empire of sin. Truth and justice demand that exceptions should be made from this general sentence of denunciation, particularly in favor of some works of this class, which are of modern date. Their materials are drawn from the living world, and though worked up by fancy, to impart to them the interest of a tale, they fulfil to some extent the office of history, and inculcate important lessons of truth. But while these and some other peculiarities exempt them from unqualified condemnation, and entitle them to a preference among works of this class, still, like the miserable fictions which preceded them, they often "cause to err from the words of knowledge."

Could nothing more be said of these works but that they merely furnish amusement, we should scarcely have given them a notice from the pulpit. But while as a body they are useless for any higher purpose, they have a bearing upon the moral and religious interests of the community, which demands the note of warning. Combining in themselves eloquence, humor, wit, all the powers of language and all the graces of style, they possess an attractiveness scarcely to be resisted. Hence they are read with avidity, at an age when their influence is most to be deprecated. To these sources may be traced many errors both in principle and practice which war against the soul.

Were these various classes of pernicious books brought together into one vast pile, and, like those of the converts at Ephesus, "burned before all men," the world would experience no real loss, but infinite

gain. The first and second classes breathe the unmingled atmosphere of pollution and death. And the last, with few exceptions, tend to corrupt the youthful heart and divert it from the proper objects of pursuit, and especially from the great interests of eternity.

II. The manner in which this is done, or the evil tendency of such works, is the second point of consideration.

1. They waste precious time. "What is our life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away!" This is its character viewed in its greatest extent, from the cradle to three score years and ten, the allotted period of human life. Subtract from this period the hours devoted to refreshment and rest, the time spent in business, employed in the discharge of ordinary domestic duties, or given to needful exercise, and what remains? A third part of human life is passed in the unconsciousness of sleep. Add to this what is appropriated to eating and drinking, or to worldly engagements, and the remainder dwindles to a span.

But man is not born to a mere worldly existence. His intellectual and moral powers point him out the heir of a higher and nobler destiny; a destiny beyond the grave, in the presence of God, in the company of angels, among the spirits of the just made perfect. While wedded to his sinfulness this inheritance is in forfeiture. But through the reign of grace, it is still held forth to his acceptance, and he is enjoined and urged, by timely repentance—by striving against and forsaking every evil way, appropriating Jesus Christ in his merits and offices, living in obedience to the Divine commands, cultivating holiness, and being active in every good work—to press forward to the heavenly possession.

Failing in the attainment of this, the soul sinks under accumulated guilt, into everlasting wo! Such is the character of human existence. Threatened on one side with overwhelming ruin, wooed on the other by immortal bliss. To flee the one and lay hold on the other, are the great purposes for which life is continued; and were every moment of it appropriated to the grand object, it would not be too much. But a great proportion is necessarily diverted, and a fragment only can be made available. Reading, prayer, self communion, active benevolence, all the means employed and efforts made, are to a great extent circumscribed within the narrow limits of this unappropriated period. Whether this period be longer or shorter than has been intimated, what is it in comparison with the work to be performed?

Shall a part even of this be spent in vain and unprofitable reading? Shall we give to mere amusement, the precious and invaluable hours on which hang the immortal interests of immortal man? Is it not a lavish expenditure and sinful waste of an invaluable gift?

Where such reading is indulged, until it grows into a habit, we can scarcely calculate the waste of time. There is a fascination in well written works of fiction, (and to these I now allude,) which gives them a magic power over the soul, by means of which they insensibly steal away months and years. If the time thus spent makes a serious inroad upon life, contemplated as a whole, how much more serious the inroad made upon the golden period of youth! With you, my young friends, it is emphatically a wasting of the seed time on which hang the hopes of the future harvest. And if you, under such circumstances, perish in your sins, how utterly without excuse will you be, in the presence of the great Judge! He has admonished you with frequency and tenderness,—"Redeem the time." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." But, in direct contempt of all, you throw away the hours big with the promise of the year, in pursuit of worthless gratification. Dare you, in this manner, pervert the talents entrusted to your charge? Dare you so challenge the character of the wasteful steward, before the bar of God, and bring upon yourself the fearful sentence,—"Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness?" Such is your presumption when you spend time in unprofitable reading.

Add to what has been said, the further consideration that these works, while they amuse, corrupt the mind; those of the first classes infusing a most deadly poison; those of the last, a poison less virulent and active, but scarcely less fatal; and the waste of time grows in criminality a thousand fold. The period granted, in mercy, to heal the disorders of the soul, you devote to spreading and deepening the infection; and thus work death with what was intended to be the means of endless life!

2. They create a disrelish for serious reading. "Search the *Scriptures*, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they which testify of me." In such language the great Prophet of mankind indicates one of the chief sources of religious instruction and influence. A preached gospel is the grand means which God has instituted for the conversion and training of the soul. But next to this, and inferior only to it in importance, is the reading of the Scriptures and other religious works. Faith and all those associate virtues which form the christian character, and qualify the soul for the service and enjoyment of God, originate in a knowledge of that truth which is embodied in the word of God, and can only be acquired through the medium of hearing and reading.

Whatever tends to unfit the mind for employing this means must prejudice the best interests of man. Will any dispute that this is the effect of the works under consideration? Infidelity wars against

truth in all its forms, and uses its utmost efforts to render it odious and despicable,—that the mind may keep itself in utter estrangement from it. Sobriety and seriousness are laughed to scorn on every page it issues from the press. The very terms are hateful to it, as a representation of habits which frown upon its principles and reprove its practices. So far as infidelity extends, therefore, Revelation will be regarded with aversion and disgust. The heart will recoil from it as a system of falsehood, a usurper of its rights, and an enemy to its enjoyments.

A similar influence is exerted by works of the second class. Filling the imagination with images of impurity, inflaming lust, and cherishing a spirit of licentiousness, they render truth odious to the soul, and it turns from it with loathing and abhorrence. "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness, or what communion hath light with darkness?"

Does a better spirit emanate from the pen of fiction? Does the novel, the romance, the tragedy, the comedy, cherish a disposition favorable to that truth which enlightens, purifies, and quickens the soul? On the contrary do we not find that they who habituate themselves to reading works of this character, rarely seek after those of a higher class?—that books which inform and strengthen the mind, and more especially those which quicken the conscience and purify the heart, are regarded with prejudice, or aversion?

Such works are designed for instruction and improvement, and cannot therefore minister to the appetite and taste of those who are looking for mere amusement. The Bible and kindred works present to the lovers of fiction no startling novelties, no spirit stirring incidents, no brilliant wit, no flowing humor, to give fascination to their pages, and lead the mind captive at will. They may be resorted to by them for something to ease a troubled conscience, or fortify the mind against the influence of truth, but not from any feeling of interest, or desire of improvement. They are equally revolting to minds trained and disciplined in the school of fancy, because of the fixedness of thought and closeness of attention necessary to make them tributary to their improvement. They love to move with rail road speed, and gather their harvest of enjoyment without an effort.

Is it not so, my young friends? I appeal to your own experience, to know whether the pages of a novel give a relish for the Scriptures? Whether as your interest grows in works of fiction you do not feel an increasing prejudice against all serious reading?

3. They are unfavorable to the interests of morality. To attempt to argue this with respect to the writings of infidelity would be worse than a waste of time; for it would seem to admit that there was

some shadow of ground for the claim they arrogantly press, that they are the friends of morality. Friends of morality! Their influence upon morality is like that of Samson upon the harvests of the Philistines when he sent forth his foxes with their fire brands.

A mere glance of thought must satisfy every mind that the effect of works of licentiousness is the same. While the former aim to corrupt the streams by poisoning the fountain, the latter exert their influence immediately upon the streams.

The tendency of works of fiction to produce such results is not so easily perceived, nor so readily admitted. Their authors and advocates challenge public patronage as the friends of morality and the enemies of vice; and would have themselves constituted the chief nurses and guardians of the youthful mind. And yet the name of God is rarely introduced upon their pages, unless to frame an oath, or fill an exclamation; the Scriptures are brought forward only to point a witticism; public sentiment is recognized as the test of propriety of conduct; passion is constituted the moving power of the soul; and the approbation of conscience or the applause of the world the ultimate ends to be attained. Look at the heroes or heroines of fancy, over whom you bend with admiration and rapture; and when stripped of the attractions thrown around them by their name, their rank, their circumstances, their destiny, what are they but creatures of selfishness, slaves of passion, votaries of pleasure, proud, imperious, vain, and resentful, idolizing the world in some or other of its forms, and anxious to advance their interests, and gain a reputation among men, but thoughtless of God, and of Jesus Christ, and reckless of eternity? If they have a fair character, are alive with sensibility, exhibit patience in suffering and liberality in action, it is to gratify themselves, and secure the esteem of the world. Are these the qualities which fit men to be uniformly trusted in the various departments and relations of life? Will selfishness, the code of honor, or worldly applause, form the consistent, stable character, who will adorn the domestic and social circle, and be the upright citizen and the devoted patriot?

True morality has its spring in God, recognizes his word as the standard of conduct, and seeks to recommend itself to the Divine approbation. Let these things combine, and they form a character to act with integrity in every department. Nothing less than this, nothing that is of mere earthly origin, can form such a character. Nothing less than this can triumph over the depravity of the heart, and elevate the soul above the reach of worldly corruption. Without this, our morality is mere counterfeit coin, imposing perhaps in the eye of the world, but in the view of God, reprobate.

Nor does it improve the moral influence of these works, that vice

is exhibited as tending to poverty, disgrace, and ruin; and virtue as leading to honor and reward. The mind soon discovers that this picture of fancy is often the reverse of fact, and becomes insensible to its power. But did it exhibit truth, it would fail to accomplish its intended purpose. Mere temporal sanctions, (and they give them no other character,) however great, struggle in vain against the dominion of sin. Hell must move itself, with its eternal horrors, and heaven unbosom its everlasting joys, ere vice becomes loathsome, and virtue triumphs in the soul. A stranger to these motives, the pen of fiction wields no power sufficient to control the selfish spirit, and dispose it to act with uniform integrity.

If any youth, who hears me, would stand before the world, "an honest man, the noblest work of God," he must draw on higher and purer sources than works of fiction, and graduate in a better school of morals than that to which the novelist or the tragedian invites him.

4. Such writings war against the spiritual interests of the soul. Infidelity and libertinism hate religion with a perfect hatred, and infuse their venom into every page they write. The inscription on their banner is, War, eternal war against the Christian's God; and the soul that imbibes their sentiments, receives the baptism of hell.

A somewhat better spirit lives in the pages of fiction, and an opposite purpose is avowed by their authors. But do they really labor in a better cause? Their influence, however slow and imperceptible in its operation, has still the same tendency, and is more to be feared and deprecated, because unsuspected and more widely diffused. Multitudes who turn away with loathing and abhorrence from the former, read the latter with avidity and delight.

Their general popularity furnishes the strongest presumptive evidence of their unfavorableness to the religious interests of mankind. This world must undergo an entire change, ere works which advocate the rights of God, and the immortal interests of man, find so general a welcome.

But examine the works themselves. Is there any thing on the pages of the novel, or the play, to inspire a reverence for God, or remind you of his providential rule? Does any among their varied personages appear, to admonish you of the native corruption of your heart, of the evil of sin, of the terrors of the Lord? Does any finger point to Him "who died, the just for the unjust?" Does any voice cry, "flee from the wrath to come?" Were these the strains they uttered, instead of being resorted to for amusement, they would be thrown aside in disgust.

But no! with the novelist and his associates, man is a creature of infirmity, rather than of sinfulness; his vices are offences to be

overlooked, instead of crimes to be punished. In their view, God reigns, (if he reigns at all,) to exercise mercy, not to execute judgment; future rewards are the earnings of merit, not the bestowment of grace; and punishments are warded off by reformation, not by atoning blood.

Where such sentiments are instilled into the mind continually, what is to be expected but that conscience should be at ease, and the soul repose in proud security on its own merits? The gospel comes with its denunciations and warnings, to bring to penitence and make a Saviour welcome; but they are resisted with the plea of frailty, or on the ground of merit. What can they fear, whose offences are without guilt, and whose virtues commend to approbation! Why should they sorrow in penitence, who are full of worth, or trust in a Saviour, when they feel able to justify themselves?

Such is the pernicious influence emanating from these sources. Through it the soul is entrenched in error, conscience is hushed by false pleas, a spirit of self-vindication and self-righteousness is cherished, the provisions of grace are rejected as superfluous, and Jesus Christ is superseded by the religion of nature. Men live in impenitence, in unbelief, in prayerlessness, in the love of the world, in sin, in sensuality; and yet are confident in the hope of heaven.

Where such is the training of the mind, no wonder God appeals, and the Spirit strives, and Jesus Christ entreats, and the gospel invites, without effect. Every avenue to the conscience and heart is closed up, and how shall grace find entrance? To what extent this influence operates in neutralizing the efficacy of public ordinances among ourselves, can be known only to him who is acquainted with all our ways. No doubt its power is felt to an extent that is little imagined. It not only repels truth from the soul, but it is a direct hindrance to the pursuit of salvation. It combines with other influences to impress upon the soul the fatal lesson, that it is "rich, and increased in goods, and has need of nothing." And while it continues, and is attended with such results, that which should be a garden of the Lord, will remain a barren waste.

Such, then, are the prominent evils consequent upon the reading of improper books. Evils which affect, immediately or indirectly, the salvation of the soul. It was in this light chiefly that I wished to consider the practice. In this view it comes within the province of the pulpit.

Is it not amply demonstrated that the books adverted to, breathe an atmosphere destructive to the soul? Do they not steal away those precious hours which bear salvation on their wings, and cause the soul to cease from the instruction which is good, and corrupt its morals, and war against its spiritual and eternal interests? And shall

we withhold the admonition, "Enter not into their path, go not in the way of them, avoid them, pass not by them, turn from them, and pass away?" Evil books, like evil companions, possess the magic power of assimilating to themselves all who are familiarly conversant with them. So that with respect to them, as well as the other, it may be said, "tell me what company you keep, and I will tell you what you are."

How cautious then ought you to be in the selection of books, both for yourselves and others; and how scrupulously to avoid the reading of such as have been here adverted to. Look at the native character of man, "conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity," "prone to evil as the sparks to fly upward." How difficult is it to effect in him any moral renovation! Variety of means adapted to this purpose by infinite wisdom and unbounded grace are in continued operation; but with all their power how little do they accomplish! Will you increase the difficulty, by cherishing influences of an opposite tendency, which will blind the mind, sear the conscience, harden the heart, and render change still more difficult? If you in this manner resist the efforts of grace, and waste the season of merciful visitation, what can you anticipate but to be given up of God to hardness of heart and to blindness of mind?

You, my young friends, are particularly exposed to danger from these sources. While a natural curiosity and propensity to skepticism interests you in the first class of works, and the workings of passion give you a relish for the second, fashion and the love of amusement incline you to the third. And never was the danger greater than at the present day. Infidelity, licentiousness and fancy are all in motion. The press teems with books of every character, and particularly of the latter class; and every art is employed to give them circulation. The typographer, the engraver, and binder, concentrate their powers to render them attractive. Their prices are reduced to a trifle, and the temptation to possess, and of course to read, becomes almost irresistible.

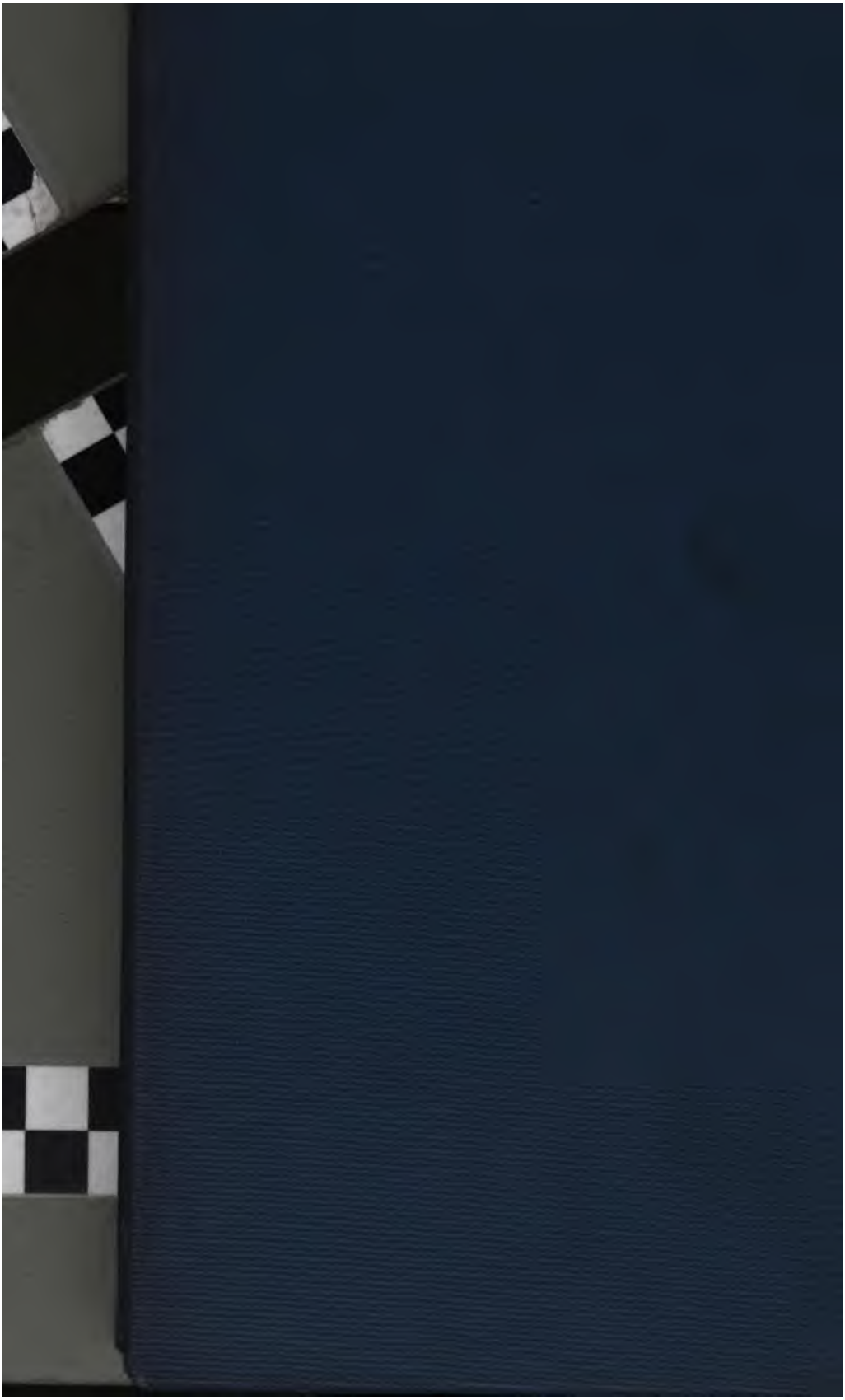
Give heed, then, beloved youth, to this voice of warning. You would not expose your bodies to the pestilence or the hurricane; and will you suffer a moral tempest to sweep over the soul? Rather turn away from that which will corrupt and destroy, and diligently improve the means with which you are favored, and you may fortify yourselves against present evil, and reap the harvest of eternal good. While "Wisdom cries, and understanding puts forth her voice, why will ye spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfieth not? Eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Every end to be gained from such works, can be gained in a far higher degree, and

with comparative safety, from books of a different character. If you would gratify curiosity, find rational amusement, and combine profit with pleasure, read history, biography, works of science, and polite literature. They will improve the mind without causing it to err. But evil books are like the forbidden fruit. You taste of them at the hazard of your eternal well being.

While, then, we warn both young and old against that which infuses poison, we would earnestly recommend those works which purify and save the soul. Above all, search the Scriptures. They are "the wisdom and the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth." These and kindred writings are proper food for the immortal mind—causing it, under the Divine blessing, to grow up into everlasting life; whilst the direct tendency of those upon which we have animadverted, is to corrupt, to dissipate, and destroy.

Our subject furnishes a solemn rebuke to those who, for paltry gain, employ themselves in writing, printing, or selling infidel, impure, or fictitious works—works which they know, or ought to know, are adapted to waste the time, pervert the taste, corrupt the morals, and ruin the souls of men. Could the spirits of lost millions come up from their abodes of wo, would they not say to such, with affecting emphasis,—You, and such as you, have been the instruments of our eternal undoing!—You furnish the fatal poison which "causeth to err from the words of knowledge!"

Our subject, also, solemnly urges upon parents and instructors of youth, the duty of seeing that they are amply supplied with proper "food for the mind," and never indulged with such as tends to dissipate, corrupt, and destroy. Let them forthwith examine their library, and if need be, follow the noble example of those who, for conscience's sake and the gospel's, at once sacrificed books to the value of "fifty thousand pieces of silver." What is such a sacrifice compared with the ruin of one immortal mind?

It is time that the virtuous, and patriotic, and Christian part of the community be aroused on this subject. And on those especially who have influence and wealth, devolves the responsibility of seeing that all our youth are abundantly supplied with useful and interesting books; so that they may have no occasion or desire for such as insidiously work corruption and everlasting death.

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